

PATRIARCHAL IMAGES OF GOD AND VIOLENCE TOWARDS WOMEN

VOLUME 1

By

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ABSTRACT

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The narratives that we live by are highly informed by religious indoctrination. When that indoctrination is patriarchal in nature, the likelihood for conflict arises as patriarchy and matriarchy are perceived as two opposing extremes. That conflict is further exacerbated when those who do not fit the image of a God defined by patriarchal men, are seen as *others*, outside the auspices of God's original creation. Oppression, that gives way to violence, is often the consequence as patriarchy endeavors to maintain its claim of supremacy. All too often, the maintenance of power, by the use of male imagery for the divine, calls for the denial and suppression of feminine imagery and agency. The fervent quest to maintain patriarchal power in the church manifests itself in every sector of society as women are subjected to violence so that men can continue to make God in their image.

The purpose of this participatory demonstration project is was to determine how traditional Christian theology has socialized men into roles that support the domination and subsequent violence towards women in the church and in society. The project seeks to answer three important questions:

- What are some of the traditional theological and biblical roots for patriarchal images of God?
- How do relationships with women, grounded in domination-subordination, translate into intimate partner violence?

- What educational process will counter-socialize men in an effort to reduce violence against women?

An analysis of these three research questions will help to form a basis in which the religious roots of violence towards women can be identified, and offer men a method to re-story and embrace alternative narratives for the purpose of reducing violence and increasing peace with women.

In Memory of my mother, Vivian E. Murray, who despite being subject to the perils of patriarchy, always managed to display the love, grace, and sacrifice that mirrored the face of God; my father, Milton L. Murray Sr., whose brief presence in my life shaped me into the man I am today; and the Rev Dr. Joan Speaks, whose guidance, love, and friendship inspired me to make Conflict Transformation a way of life. I stand on the shoulders of each of you.

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List of Abbreviations

KJV	King James
M.O.S.T	Men of Spirit and Truth
NIV	New International Version
NLT	New Living Translation
SBC	Southern Baptist Convention
TLC	Transforming Love Community

INTRODUCTION TO THE CONFLICT

The world is full of conflict. And wherever conflict is found, opportunities for transformation exist. These opportunities, however, must be preceded by an honest assessment of the underlying issues that act as the source of the conflict. Whether the conflict is between competing political and religious ideologies, or racial, ethnic, gender identities – what often lies at the bottom of the conflict is a need for power, control and certainty. Rather than seeing conflict as a normal part of human relations, it is often seen as an undesirable occurrence, characterized by the need to be *right*. In the absence of constructive ways to deal with conflict, it becomes an adversarial event that can easily descend into violence – whether that violence is physical, mental, or psychological. Those who are not interested in resolving conflict are often the ones who benefit from it. The need to be right eclipses concern for the *other* as it becomes easier for those that historically have a voice to abuse those who don't. This on-going process then develops into systems that are utilized to uphold the status-quo. By minimizing the humanity of the *other*, it becomes easier, in the mind of the abuser, to negate the needs of those he sees as inferior.

Historically speaking, the violence perpetrated by those who create systems of power, is most often found in the form of discrimination, with physical violence often being the result of that discrimination. By labeling *others* as second-class citizens, discrimination is justified by the oppressor and is accompanied by preconceived assumptions and notions of superiority/inferiority that are ultimately meant to divide the

powerful from the powerless. For example, the concept of *race* is used to conjure up differences between people of different ethnicities and skin colors. These differences are then used to indoctrinate the greater society into accepting ideas of superiority and inferiority.

The same is done as it relates to religion. Religion can also be used as a means to label, separate, and discriminate. History has shown that violence has often been the end result of religious differences. Even at this present time, our nation and our world are reaping the consequences that result from notions of religious certainty and domination. The seeds of religious separation were planted early in our human history, and the effects of that planting can still be felt today. The very act of separation can be one that breeds violence. Just as the separation of races leads to ideas of racial superiority, the separation of religions can lead to claims of religious certainty – one religion claiming to be the *true religion* while the other is the *false religion*. One only needs to glance at history to realize that religion has significantly contributed to the bloodshed and terrorism throughout our world.

The same can be said for the effects of gender discrimination. By designating one gender as superior over the other, the stage is set for tensions to arise due to the physical and psychological separation of the sexes. Gender violence is the unfortunate consequence of this phenomenon. Specifically, the most devastating, yet largely unaddressed form of this is violence towards women. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence website reports the following facts:

- Every 9 seconds in the U.S. a woman is assaulted or beaten.¹
- 1 in 5 women has been raped in their lifetime²
- One in every three women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime³
- An estimated 1.3 million women are victims of physical assault by an intimate partner each year.⁴
- 85% of domestic violence victims are women⁵

Frederick Douglass, when speaking on women's rights, said the following,

A woman should have every honorable motive exertion which is enjoyed by man, to the full extent of her capabilities and endowments. The case is too plain for argument. Nature has given woman the same powers, and subjected her to the same earth, breathes the same air, subsists on the same food, physical, moral, mental and spiritual. She has, therefore, an equal right with man, in all efforts to obtain and maintain a perfect existence.⁶

The alarming nature of the above statistics is at direct odds with the sentiment expressed by Douglass. Contrary to Douglass' words, the statistics paint the picture that far too many women are *not* treated honorably and are *not* able to live the *perfect*

¹ Ronet Bachman and Linda Saltzman, (1995) "Violence against Women: Estimates from the Redesigned Survey," *Bureau of Justice Statistics Report*, August 1995, <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/FEMVIED.PDF>.

² Patricia Tjaden and Nancy Thoennes, "Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women," *National Institute of Justice Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Research in Brief*, November 1998, <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/172837.pdf>.

³ Patricia Tjaden and Nancy Thoennes, *Extent, Nature and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence: Findings for the National Violence Against Women Survey* (Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice and the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, July 2000), <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/181867.pdf>.

⁴ National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, *Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States* (Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Centers for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003), <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/IPVBook-a.pdf>.

⁵ Callie Marie Rennison, "Intimate Partner Violence, 1993-2001," *Bureau of Justice Statistics Crime Data Brief*, February 2003, <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ipv01.pdf>.

⁶ Jone Johnson Lewis, "Frederick Douglass Quotes on Women's Rights," *About.com*, <http://womenshistory.about.com/od/quotes/a/douglass.htm> (accessed April 24, 2016).

existence that he speaks about. In fact, the statistics point to the fact that violence against women is an epidemic that threatens to destroy the very foundations of this country – justice, equality, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And for a country that considers itself advanced and uses family values as a measurement of morality, these numbers give rise to a much deeper issue when it comes to relations between men and women.

In the effort to reduce gender violence, we must first endeavor to uncover the root(s) of such violence. The prior statistics, while concerned with incidences of physical violence, fail to take into account the ways in which violence can be perpetrated psychologically, mentally, and financially. In fact, these forms of violence can be a precursor to physical violence or can occur simultaneously. In order for healthy relationships to exist, violence must be eliminated and replaced with healthy ways to communicate and handle conflict. Relationships, by their very nature, consist of conflict. It is only in the absence of constructive ways to deal with conflict that it sinks to levels of violence. The need to be right or exert control over the other is counterproductive to healthy relationships. Unfortunately, all too often, this need can be a fatal blow to relationships – figuratively and literally.

This project proposes a Conflict Transformation approach to uncover ways in which violence is perpetrated towards women, discover ways in which to reduce that violence, and create processes that will contribute to long-term peace and increase gender justice. A transformational approach to this issue dictates that we not only *look* at the immediate issue of violence towards women, but we also *see* beyond the immediacy to uncover its root causes. When speaking of conflict, the renowned conflict transformation

specialist, John Paul Lederach, advocates the need for us to look beyond the normal auspices of conflict resolution or management – for these approaches often provide short-term results.

Resolution often focuses our attention on the presenting problems. Given its emphasis on immediate solutions, it tends to concentrate on the substance and content of the problem. This may explain why there has been such a predominance of literature on negotiation technique within the field of conflict resolution – from popular airport bookstands to the halls of major research institutes. In short, resolution is content centered.

Transformation, on the other hand, includes the concern for content, but centers its attention on the context of relationship patterns. It sees conflict as embedded in the web and system of relational patterns.⁷

For the purposes of this project, I'll be analyzing the relational patterns of men and women within the context of religion – specifically Christianity. I'll also be using the Bible as the text from which I draw examples of how women are viewed, as well as scriptures that are used and interpreted in such a way to inform men how to treat women. Biblical interpretations have been used for centuries to indoctrinate the masses and violate those who weren't part of the dominant class. The manner in which women are portrayed in much of the Bible, and the way that religious men throughout the ages have espoused the inferiority of women, has significantly contributed to the abuse of women worldwide.

In his book, *A Call To Action: Women, Religion, Violence, and Power*, Jimmy Carter says,

The truth is that male religious leaders have had – and still have – an option to interpret holy teachings either to exalt or subjugate women. They have, for their own selfish ends, overwhelmingly chosen the latter. Their

⁷ John Paul Lederach, *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2003), 1.

continuing choice provides the foundation or justification for much of the pervasive persecution and abuse of women throughout the world.⁸

The preceding quote invites us to consider that religion, and the varied ways in which sacred texts are interpreted, is a source of the conflict. Violence, then, is the destructive result of this conflict. And in the absence of biblical interpretations in Christianity that are inclusive, violence will continue to flourish. Therefore, the thrust must be to reinterpret scriptures in a manner that views men and women equally...both being original ideas in the mind of God.

A deeper source of the conflict resides in the fact that many of those who read scriptures believe them to be the infallible Word of God. In other words, they believe in the authority of scriptures exactly the way they were written and currently presented – no questions asked. So, before any reinterpretation can take place, we must explore, or at least be willing to admit that some scriptures either contain errors or are obsolete – only pertaining to the times in which they were written. For many Christians, the thought of this shakes the very foundation of their belief. Those who interpret the Bible literally and believe in its infallibility often quote the following scripture taken from *2Timothy 3:16*

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

With this scripture as a defense, Christians throughout the ages have justified their tendency to diminish, exclude, and discriminate against others who believe differently. And more often than not, many pick and choose the scriptures they want to use for their benefit, while totally ignoring scriptures that totally contradict the scriptures they so ardently adhere to. For these reasons, we find just as much or more conflict within the

⁸ Jimmy Carter, "Losing My Religion for Equality," *The Age*, July 15, 2009, <http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/losing-my-religion-for-equality-20090714-dk0v.html>.

Christian community, as we do between Christianity and other religions. The emergence of different denominations within the Christian community is a direct reflection of the varied reliance on particular scriptures and their accompanying interpretations. For example, Pentecostals strongly believe that speaking in tongues is evidence of the Holy Spirit, and many will use the book of Acts to support their claim. In fact, I had a reformed Pentecostal tell me recently that if they encountered a Christian, particularly who did not or had not spoken tongues, they didn't consider him/her to be *saved*. As one who was raised Baptist, I was not taught that speaking in tongues was the definitive evidence of the Holy Spirit. I was taught, using the book of 1 Corinthians as a reference, that *speaking in tongues* was one gift of many – therefore not the only evidence of being *saved*. Moreover, we as Baptist were instructed to believe that *Love* was superior to the gift of tongues. Both of these denominations have used the interpretation of these scriptures as part their respective doctrines. Followers of these denominations, therefore, come to believe in the authority of that doctrine and become susceptible to the exclusivity that indoctrination brings.

The same has been done for another divisive issue in Christianity – whether women are equal to men in the eyes of God. Those who believe in the inferior status of women are not just Bible literalists, but also choose select scriptures that support their belief. While there are two separate creation stories in the book of Genesis, those wishing to justify male dominance often rely on the second account of creation, found in Genesis 2: 21-23, as opposed to the first account of creation, found in Genesis 1: 26-27. The two accounts read as follows:

Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us.
They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock,

all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground”

So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Genesis 1: 26-27

So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the Lord God took out one of the man’s ribs and closed up the opening. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

“At last!” the man exclaimed.

“This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh! She shall be called ‘woman,’ because she was taken from ‘man.’” Genesis 2: 21-23

The belief, according to the second account, is that woman is taken from man – and for some, that’s an indication that men are superior to women.

Before delving into these anchor scriptures, and other scriptures like them, we must first acknowledge the conflicting nature of the Bible. While many Christians believe the Bible to be the complete and final Word of God, there are others who believe that the scriptures are inconsistent and fallible. The conflict seems to arise from whether people believe that God stretched his hand down from the sky to pen the Bible himself, or whether the Bible was written through men who were inspired by God. If we choose to believe the latter, then we have to ask ourselves whether the men who penned the Bible were fallible men, just as they are today. If not fallible, then must we consider the context in which the Bible was written? In other words, inclusive in the Bible are notions of what men thought *about* God during the times in which it was written. This would suggest that some scriptures are fluid and that our understanding of God is evolving in nature. The tension that exists between these two views must be addressed as we look to increase peace and reduce the violence that the attachment to these views brings. Hence, our need to be certain and attached to a particular perspective is also a source of the problem. If one stays committed to believing that the scriptures reveal an ultimate and unchanging

truth, then women, as well as others, will continue to be seen as second-class citizens.

This view will ensure that women continue to be oppressed, not only in religious circles, but in society in general.

The intersection of religion and violence against women has widespread ramifications that reach far beyond the physical. Robert McAfee Brown, in his book *Religion and Violence*, states...

However, it is the subtler forms of violence, in which overt physical assault may not be present, that do the deepest harm. It is frequently made clear to women in the business world that they are viewed either as playthings for men or as threats to presumed masculine superiority. Women are often the recipients of subtle and not so subtle messages that advancement – even retention of employment – depends on compliance with the sexual advances of their male superiors, or that their “worth” is viewed in terms of physical attractiveness rather than professional competence.⁹

To illustrate this point, a recent Think Progress article reported the following: “Most Women In Silicon Valley Report Being Sexually Harassed. Most Men Play Dumb”.

To get a better sense of sexism in tech, a Silicon Valley venture capital firm launched a survey on sexual harassment. The results: Nearly two-thirds of women in tech reported unwanted sexual advances – but their male counterparts were completely unaware.

According to the survey, 60 percent of women in tech reported unwanted sexual advances, and of those who did, 65 percent said those advances were repeated and came from a superior. More than 30 percent felt unsafe in their work environments, an issue that was fueled by insufficient recourse for women who did report sexual harassment.¹⁰

⁹ Robert McAfee Brown, *Religion and Violence*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), xv.

¹⁰ Lauren C. Williams, “Women In Tech Report High Levels Of Harassment. Men Say They Had No Idea,” *Think Progress*, January 12, 2016, <http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2016/01/12/3738390/kleiner-perkins-harassment-study> (accessed April 24, 2016).

As I expand the definition of violence in a later chapter, I will show that violence includes all actions that are harmful to another. These would include financial disparities, emotional abuse, silencing the voice of women, as well as excluding women from positions of leadership within the church.

Any study of violence towards women would not be complete without an analysis of male privilege. Patriarchal standards and ideas of masculinity are the foundation from which this violence and oppression is born. The privilege of setting the standards has historically ensured that power remains in the hands of those who create the standards. Therefore, power and privilege will always go hand-in-hand. In the case of religion, there can be nothing more powerful than having the privilege to create the image of a male deity – a deity who is said to be the author and finisher of the rules that *subjugate* women.

Images create perceptions. Whether consciously or unconsciously, images bring to mind all of the characteristics and traits that have historically been associated with that image. When presented with an image of a God that has certain physical characteristics, the possibility exists that all those who don't share in those physical characteristics, are somehow negated. This can affect how we perceive, live, and relate to one another. In *Feminist Mysticism and Images of God*, Jennie S. Knight invites us to examine those images:

We live out the images that inform us. Images of the divine, other people, and one's self are profoundly interrelated within each person's imagination. They affect every relationship, including the divine. For this reason it is crucial that we examine the images that shape our lives. In the Christian mystical tradition, the divine is described as a mystery greater

than any image or name can contain. At the same time, human minds use images to relate to the divine.¹¹

An examination of the images presented to us, along with the impact and perceptions that these images have produced, is crucial to transforming the relational patterns among people. This is no easy task, as it will cause people to question and redefine the identity that they've held on to for all of their lives. In the process, however, the opportunity to reimage the divine will encourage people to reimage themselves, thereby creating a society that minimizes separation and maximizes oneness – increasing peace, while decreasing violence.

The aims of the project are multi-faceted. The first aim is to increase men's awareness of the objectification of women and the various forms of violence that they're subjected to. In doing so, I will give men a historical perspective that shows how the early church perceived women and how these images, supported by Christian texts, created a perception of women that still exists in many sects of Christianity. The second aim is for men to awaken to the patriarchal nature of Biblical texts, and how textual teachings have affected their views, and society's views, of women. The third aim is for men to recognize how the process of masculine indoctrination has served to deepen the divide between men and women, and served as a root cause of the violence that is perpetrated against them. Finally, the fourth aim is to invite men to see how reimagining God and interpreting scripture inclusively, can transform their perceptions of women – thereby providing a foundation from which they can live, love, and exist with women on a more peaceful and equitable basis.

¹¹ Jennie S. Knight, *Feminist Mysticism and Images of God: A Practical Theology* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2011), 2.

Chapter 1 acquaints the reader with the prevalence of violence against women and gives a brief history of the Christian roots of that violence. The chapter also uncovers the perverse attitudes and perceptions of women and how they set the tone for the objectification and oppression of women. Biblical scriptures will be identified that give witness to the fact that women's bodies were not their own and considered expendable in the cause of religious conquests. Finally, the chapter will illustrate how early church attitudes about women are still, not only adhered to today, but responsible for policies and actions that are violent toward them.

Chapter 2 introduces the reader to the concept of patriarchy and how it exists as the system that bestows a secondary status to women, while bestowing primary power and privilege to men. This privilege ensures that men essentially make, interpret, and mete out justice according standards that they create. The chapter also illustrates how patriarchy extends its reach into virtually every institution that our country holds dear.

Chapter 3 examines the way in which men are indoctrinated into masculinity. The chapter also reveals how the very process of indoctrination is one that puts men at odds with the feminine aspect of creation. The chapter further exposes how the unhealthy nature of masculine indoctrination causes many men to turn violence inward before directing it outward. Finally, the chapter will invite the reader to see that hyper masculinity, like patriarchy, creates power structures that breed violence and threaten to destroy the personhood of women.

Chapter 4 introduces Narrative Mediation as the method through which transformation takes place within the project. Through a series of workshops and dialogues, men will reveal the stories and experiences that have given way to conflict in

their lives and in their relationships. The chapter illustrates how the participants identified their own conflict story within the context of their cultural indoctrination. By identifying the roots of their own conflict story, men begin to see how the narrative of their lives can conflict with other narratives, thereby creating greater conflict stories within relationships. Finally, the chapter shows how participants engage in the initial stages of deconstructing the stories of violence and masculinity that they were indoctrinated with. The chapter continues to explore early narratives that the men were exposed to as it relates to religion and their perceptions of women. The revealing of these narratives takes place in the form of an administered survey, Images of God and Perceptions of Women. The structuring of the survey, as well as the specific questions asked, is intended to invite the respondents to see how early Christian teachings have informed their perceptions of women. Finally, the chapter will report and analyze the data gathered from the surveys, and reveal how the process of engaging the survey encouraged some men to question or further explore their prior narratives and perception.

Chapter 5 offers alternatives to defining God by a male construct only. The chapter also, accompanied by an expanded definition of God, provides inclusive scriptures and interpretations of scripture that elevate and include women as original agents in the advancement of the Kingdom of God. In terms of relationships, the chapter proposes that the recognition of women's agency, along with their inherent right to exist equitably, will reduce the adversarial nature of relationships and create unions based on divine love, mutual respect, and everlasting peace.

In Chapter 6, I will present my conclusions to the project. I will offer my thoughts on the action research process and the growth experienced by all participants, including

me. I will also ascertain how well the project stayed aligned with the original purpose. The chapter will also give me the opportunity to reflect on what I could've done better in the hopes of honing the project for future use. The chapter will end with the multiple opportunities for conflict transformation that this project provides.

CHAPTER 1 WHEN CHRISTIANITY VIOLATES HUMANITY

For many Christians, the roots of feminine identity and gender roles continue to be defined by strict adherence to Biblical scriptures, particularly the Genesis account of the creation and fall of man. Throughout the years, various interpretations have been espoused. Among the many varied accounts, two facts have seemed to remain constant within traditional Christian theology – woman is inferior to man, and woman is the temptress who was ultimately responsible for the fall of man. The progression of thought throughout the centuries has shown anything but progress. Early Church Fathers, theologians, and reformers were not subtle in their comments about women:

Tertullian, “the father of Latin Christianity”, said,

In pain shall you bring forth children, woman, and you shall turn to your husband and he shall rule over you. And do you not know that you are Eve? God’s sentence hangs still over all your sex and His punishment weighs down upon you. You are the devil’s gateway; you are she who first violated the forbidden tree and broke the law of God. It was you who coaxed your way around him whom the devil had not the force to attack. With what ease you shattered that image of god: Man! Because of the death you merited, even the son of God had to die... Woman, you are the gate to hell.¹²

13th century Dominican theologian, Saint Albertus Magnus, stated:

Woman is a misbegotten man and has a faulty and defective nature in comparison to his. Therefore she is unsure in herself. What she cannot get, she seeks to obtain through lying and diabolical deceptions. And so, to put

¹² Bibles, Wheels, and Brains, “Anti-Woman Quotes by Church Fathers,” <http://www.biblewheel.com/forum/showthread.php?3349-Anti-Woman-Quotes-by-Church-Fathers> (accessed April 24, 2016).

it briefly, one must be on one's guard with every woman, as if she were a poisonous snake and the horned devil... Thus in evil and perverse doings woman is cleverer, that is, slyer, than man. Her feelings drive woman toward every evil, just as reason impels man toward all good.¹³

Additionally, the 4th century theologian, Saint Augustine, who was highly instrumental in shaping Western Christian thought, and is often referred to as one of the most important Catholic Church Fathers, said the following as it pertains to the woman and the image of God,

Woman does not possess the image of God in herself but only when taken together with the male who is her head, so that the whole substance is one image. But when she is assigned the role as helpmate, a function that pertains to her alone, then she is not the image of God. But as far as the man is concerned, he is by himself alone the image of God just as fully and completely as when he and the women are joined together into one.¹⁴

As far as a woman's worth is concerned, he proposed the following,

What is the difference whether it is in a wife or a mother, it is still Eve the temptress that we must beware of in any women... I fail to see what use woman can be to a man, if one excludes the function of bearing children.¹⁵

The beloved Protestant theologian and reformer, Martin Luther furthered these ideas about a woman's worth when he added that, "*The word and works of God is quite clear, that women were made either to be wives or prostitutes.*"¹⁶ He went on to say that, "*Men have broad and large chests. And narrow hips, and more understanding than women,*

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Valerie Tarico, "Twenty Vile Quotes Against Women by Church Leaders from St. Augustine to Pat Robertson," <https://valerietarico.com/2013/07/01/mysogynistquoteschurchfathers/> (accessed April 24, 2016).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

who have but small and narrow breasts, and broad hips, to the end they should remain at home, sit still, keep house, and bear and bring up children.”¹⁷

Our more contemporary Christian brothers echo the same sentiment when referring to a woman’s *place*. The Official Faith and Message Statement of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in the summer of 1998 stated, “A wife is to submit graciously to the servant leadership of her husband, even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ.”¹⁸ In the effort to sound more inclusive, the Convention’s current statement on women reads, “While Scripture teaches that a woman's role is not identical to that of men in every respect, and that pastoral leadership is assigned to men, it also teaches that women are equal in value to men.”¹⁹ Additionally, conservative Christian leader and Southern Baptist, Pat Robertson stated the following in 1992, “The feminist agenda is not about equal rights for women. It is about a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians.”²⁰

The startling reality is that, while these quotes span centuries, the continuum of thought is virtually unchanged. It is for this reason that former president Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn decided to end their relationship with the Southern Baptist Convention, the denomination to which he had devoted seventy years of his life. The 2000 decision by the SBC to reemphasize its commitment to Bible verses that call for

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Southern Baptist Convention, “Position Statements: Women in Ministry,” <http://www.sbc.net/aboutus/positionstatements.asp>.

²⁰ Television evangelist Pat Robertson in a 1992 fundraising letter.

women to be silent in church and forbids women to have authority over men at church or home, was particularly troubling to Carter and his wife. As a result of the Convention's decisions, Southern Baptist women would no longer serve as deacons, pastors, chaplains in the armed forces, or in seminary classrooms where men were present. The Southern Baptist Convention is not alone as a denomination whose practices subjugate women. The majority, if not all, Christian governing bodies, having forbade female leadership in the past, still wrestle with their positions as it relates to women's status within the church.

Moreover, the Bible reinforces the second-class status of women through the explicit nature of stories and the experiences of women between its covers. This is highly significant as we look at the relationship between religion and violence – specifically violence towards women. It would be difficult for even the casual reader to ignore the violent nature of the above comments. Likewise, it would also be hard to imagine that these early perceptions of women have not found a home in the minds and behaviors of men today. But it is not just in the explicit words of early church fathers, or scriptures alone that do damage to women, but it's also the underlying fact that much of the Bible itself was penned by men who embraced the notion of women as inferior and as the property of men. It is helpful, at this point, to offer some thoughts and criticisms of the Bible – the book which much of mainstream America cherishes as a definitive guide for knowing the thoughts of God.

The Bible

The Bible is divinely inspired, yet humanly interpreted and therefore contains some of the Word of God – and some of the word of man about God. The Bible is a wonderful guide to familiarize us with some basic concepts of God. However, God is neither confined to nor defined by the

Bible. The Bible is not to be worshipped as God, but to be revered as a guide.²¹

For those who take the Bible as the inerrant and infallible Word of God, the above quote can be hard to take. Some would even consider it blasphemous. But if the religious roots of violence are to be uncovered, then we must look at the Bible as an instrument that has been used to justify that violence. Since many Christians believe the Bible to be the full, complete, and literal Word of God, then the first task is to analyze the Bible in that context. This is a necessary undertaking, as many mainstream Christians believe that everything that was written in the Bible, starting nearly 3500 years ago, is applicable and useful for instruction today. For many, the culture, context, and authorship of particular scriptures are irrelevant. When encouraged to look at scriptures in critical ways, a typical Christian response would be, “God said it, I believe it, and that settles, it!” Cheryl B. Anderson, in *Ancient Laws & Contemporary Controversies*, tells the story of a biblical exercise she conducted in a Bible study class with teenagers who were preparing to be high school seniors. The purpose of the exercise was to encourage them to look at scriptures critically and not be afraid to question what they were reading.

We read the Ten Commandments, and I pointed out how slavery was condoned, and we read Judges 19, a particularly heinous story about the gang rape of a woman, and I showed them how one of the underlying messages of the text is that it is better for a woman to be raped than a man.

For one female African American student in the class, the exercise was a total failure. At one point, she had had enough, and she blurted out, “This is the Word of God. If it says slavery is okay, slavery is okay. If it says rape is okay, rape is okay.”²²

²¹ D.E. Paulk, *The Holy Bible of Inclusion* (Atlanta, GA: Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, 2011), 26.

²² Cheryl B. Anderson, *Ancient Laws and Contemporary Controversies: The Need for Inclusive Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3.

This response is disturbingly problematic for a number of reasons, notwithstanding the fact that she was a woman and an African American. Her commitment to her religious indoctrination and biblical supremacy obviously superseded her identity as an African American female. Her response was not just a personal sanction of slavery and rape, but it also revealed her lack of compassion for those who were enslaved and those who had been raped. It is hard to imagine that her views of slavery and rape as it existed in the Bible would not taint her views about those same atrocities being committed today.

Those who see the Bible as a rigid set of standards, lacking the fluidity that accompanies changes in culture, context, or experience, see themselves as being keepers of the Faith. In doing so, they condemn and marginalize those who are desperately seeking the inclusive love of God. By adhering to the strict laws of centuries past, they become complicit in the oppression and violence perpetrated against those they deem to be outside of God's Will, including women who overstep the boundaries created by the God of their understanding. For instance, due to a denominational directive, in an attempt to strictly adhere to scripture, a Baptist Seminary released a female faculty member in 2007. The justification for this action was taken from the book of 1 Timothy 2:12 (KJV) – *“But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.”* The fact that this faculty member, herself, was a graduate of the same seminary had no relevance in their decision; nor did the fact that she had excellent teaching evaluations up until the point of the firing. And when the definition of violence is expanded to include emotional and financial harm, I conclude that the action taken by the seminary was nothing less than violent. That scripture, along with others in the Bible, has

been used to prevent women from being pastors, preachers in the pulpit, or various other leadership positions within the church. One fundamentalist pastor went so far as to preach that women should not even say *Amen* in church because the word implies that they agree with what is being said...and in essence, that woman would be disobeying the directive to be *silent* in church. While this might be an extreme example of Bible literalism, it still gives credence to the notion that men, particularly those in the church, have a loud voice in creating the oppressive atmosphere that other men live by.

Biblical Violence

The bible teaches that a father may sell his daughter for a slave, that he may sacrifice her purity to a mob, and that he may murder her, and still be a good father and a holy man. It teaches that a man may have any number of wives; that he may sell them, give them away, or swap them around, and still be a perfect gentleman, a good husband, a righteous man, and one of God's most intimate friends; and that is a pretty good position for a beginning.²³

The Bible is a very inspirational text. This cannot be denied; however, the Bible contains an inordinate amount of violence. The God of the Old Testament is often portrayed as being jealous, angry, and vindictive. Throughout much of the Old Testament, God reveals his violent nature through acts of war, killings, requirement of human sacrifices, endorsement of rape, and abuses of women and children. Consequently, the Biblical image of God proceeds from stories men tell about God. And with that being presented as the nature of God, men then, and men now still believe that the subjugation of women is part of God's plan. Most heartbreaking are the incidences of rape in the Bible. Heartbreaking for what happened then, and heartbreaking for the implications those events still have today. Many stories in the Bible give indication that

²³ AZ Quotes, "Helen H. Gardener Quotes," http://www.azquotes.com/author/54086-Helen_H_Gardener (accessed April 24, 2016).

the patriarchal culture sanctioned violence and/or rape – including the stories of Susanna (Daniel 13), the Levite and the Concubine (Judges 19: 11-30), the rape of Dinah (Genesis 34), the story of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife that suggests that a “false rape charge” is more common than actual rape, and the rape of Tamar (II Samuel 13). In these stories, violence against women is trivialized or overlooked, thus giving the message that violations of women are less important than the rights of men and intrigue between nations.²⁴ The story of Tamar vividly illustrates this point.

The rape of Tamar in the book of II Samuel vividly illustrates how women were used, abused and discarded by men who believed they had the God-given right to do so. In the book *The Cry of Tamar: Violence against Women and the Church’s Response*, Pamela Cooper-White recounts the rape of Tamar in “The Crime of Amnon” in the book’s prologue.

David’s son Absalom had a beautiful sis whose name was Tamar, and David’s son Amnon fell in love with her. Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her. But Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab, the son of David’s brother Shimeah, and Jonadab was a very crafty man. He said to him, “Oh son of the king, why are you so haggard morning after morning? Will you not tell me?” Amnon said to him, “I love Tamar, my brother Absalom’s sister.” Jonadab said to him, “Lie down on your bed, and pretend to be ill, and when your father comes to see you, say to him, “Let my sister Tamar come and give me something to eat, and prepare the food in my sight, that I may see it, and eat it from her hand.” So Amnon lay down, and pretended to be ill, and when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, “Pray let my sister Tamar come and make a couple of cakes in my sight, so that I may eat from her hand.”

Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, “Go to your brother Amnon’s house, and prepare food for him. “So Tamar went to her brother Amnon’s house, where he was lying down. She took dough, kneaded it, made cakes

²⁴ James N. Poling, *The Abuse of Power: A Theological Problem* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 155-156.

in his sight, and baked the cakes. Then she took the pan and set them out before him, but he refused to eat. Amnon said, "Send out everyone from me." So everyone went out from him. Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food into the chamber, so that I may eat from your hand." So Tamar took the cakes she had made, and brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother. But when she brought them near him to eat, he took hold of her, and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister." She answered him, "No, my brother, do not force me, for such a thing a thing is not done in Israel, do not do anything so vile! As for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the scoundrels in Israel. Now therefore, I beg you, speak to the king, for he will not withhold me from you." But he would not listen to her, and being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her.

Then Amnon was seized with a very great loathing for her, indeed, his loathing was even greater than the lust he had felt for her. Amnon said, "Get out!" But she said to him, "No, my brother, for this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other you did to me." But he would not listen to her. He called the young man who served him and said, "Put this woman out of my presence, and bolt the door after her." (Now she was wearing a log robe with sleeves, for this is how the virgin daughters of the king were clothed in earlier times.) So his servant put her out, and bolted the door after her. But Tamar put ashes on her head, and tore the long robe she was wearing, she put her hand on her head, and went away, crying aloud as she went.

Her brother Absalom said to her, "Has Amnon your brother been with you? Be quiet now, my sister, he is your brother, do not take this to heart." So Tamar remained, a desolate woman, in her brother Absalom's house. When King David heard of all these things, he became very angry, but he would not punish his son Amnon, because he loved him, for he was his firstborn.²⁵

The story of Tamar overflows with episodes of violence perpetrated against her.

The rape of Tamar is obviously the most heinous of the encounters she has to endure. The act itself is a violation of her humanity and a testament to the ugly truth that her body did not belong to her. Not only was the physical violation an indication of her not having bodily ownership, but the fact that Amnon and Jonadab conspired to bring the rape about,

²⁵ Pamela Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar: Violence Against Women and the Church's Response*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 24.

points to the an attitude that men had about women – that they were fair game to be manipulated for the pleasures of men. And while it may have been common to hear of incestuous relationships during those times, non-consensual sex should never be *common*, but rather, seen as violent, in whichever circumstance it occurs. To add to the tragic event, this would serve as Tamar’s initiation into the world of sex. To be sure, rape is no less tragic when it’s perpetrated against women who are not virgins, but one can’t help but to feel moved by Tamar’s innocence, particularly in light of the full story.

The trauma that accompanies rape goes well beyond the physical violation alone. The Power and Control Wheel (see Appendix B), developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs, displays the variety of abusive behaviors and tactics that men use when perpetrating physical and sexual violence against women. The use of male privilege, coercion and threats, intimidation, isolation, emotional abuse, as well as minimizing and denying are just some of the violent tactics that are used to maintain power and control. The story of Tamar, when seen in its totality, demonstrates that the physical violation was surrounded by much of what we see on the Power and Control Wheel. The fact that Tamar was at the beck and call of the men in her life, gives us a clue of the expectations that were put upon women. Tamar was expected to cook and follow any other directives that were given by David or her brothers. Although accepted at the time, the use of male privilege was and still is a form of violence. When men treat women as servants, make decisions for them, and take it upon themselves to define women’s roles, they are engaging in psychological abuse. Tamar was not only expected to cook and feed her brother when requested, but she also did not have ownership over her own body. This was evident by the fact that, when begging her brother not to commit

the vile act of rape, she told Amnon that she was sure that the king would give her to him if he was to only ask. In other words, regardless of how she felt about it, if he simply requested her sexually, then the request would be granted.

After the act of rape, Amnon was overcome with such a feeling of disgust for her, that he asked Tamar to *get out*. Despite Tamar's pleas for him not to put her out – that doing so would be worse than the physical violation itself, Amnon did so anyway. Not only did he put her out, he had the door bolted behind her. As Tamar went away, crying, we are confronted with the emotionally violent nature of Amnon's actions. The abandonment, humiliation, guilt and shame that Tamar is left alone to deal with, only adds to the horror of the story. Additionally, Amnon's actions blatantly minimized the abuse that Tamar was facing – which added to her emotional stress – which can be seen by the fact that, long after the violation, Tamar remained a desolate woman. According to the patriarchal culture of the time, losing one's virginity, even by rape, diminished her value as property. She was permanently damaged, so much so that we never hear from Tamar after this incident. She was useless. Tamar's anguish was further exacerbated by the fact that her own father, King David did nothing when he heard what had happened to her. As the story goes, King David became very angry, but he refused to punish his son, because, as his firstborn, he loved him. I cannot imagine the emptiness, isolation, and despair that Tamar must have felt. Not only was she a victim of incest and domestic violence, the conspiracy of silence surrounding the event only heightens the depravity of her experience. And although some form of retribution took place, it must be noted that it didn't come until two years later. What of Tamar in the meantime? In the end, we hear no more of Tamar in the Bible. The actual story in 2 Samuel 13 continues for 19 more

chapters, but focuses on the men in the story. We hear nothing of Tamar's feelings – we are only left to speculate. We hear no significant feelings of remorse for Tamar, although we do hear about King David's remorse when Amnon is killed by his brother two years later. Astonishingly, the story is more about the status and frailty of men's egos and relegates Tamar to a mere *collateral damage* status. The entire story of Tamar reeks with violations that mirror the abusive experiences of women today. As Pamela Cooper White clearly and succinctly lists the abuses faced by Tamar, one cannot help but notice that her experience sounds eerily familiar to the experiences that victims of sexual violence experience today.

- *Tamar was sexually assaulted, not by a stranger, but by someone she knew.*
- *The violation took place not in a dark alley or in a desolate park, but by a member of her own family, at home.*
- *Tamar was exploited through one of her most vulnerable traits – her kindness and her upbringing to take care of the other*
- *Tamar said no, her no was not respected*
- *When Tamar sought help, she was told to keep quiet*
- *The process for achieving justice and restitution was taken out of her hands entirely and carried forward by her brother – it became men's business*
- *In the end, it was her perpetrator for whom her father mourned, not for her*
- *The end of Tamar's story happens without her*

Without the knowledge that the latter story is a biblical account of rape, one could wholeheartedly believe that these events were the accounting of a rape that happened as recent as yesterday. What follows is the account of a friend whose story is similarly

heinous, and unfortunately, not uncommon. For the purposes of the project, her name has been changed to protect her identity.

Cathy's Story

Cathy is a 53 year old woman who was molested by her next door neighbor between the ages of 8-10 years old. Added to that, her father was killed in a tragic accident when she was 13. As she grew into a young lady, she kept silent about the molestation and internalized the trauma of her early experiences. As it turns out, the first man that she ever dated beat her. It was at this point that Cathy realized that the relationship was mirroring what she had seen with her mother and father. Being raised in the church, however, Cathy resorted to relying on her faith and being the woman God would have her to be.

Eventually, Cathy met her brother-in-law's nephew, who was a Junior Deacon in the church. They would later get engaged. She truly believed that being a man of God would be a redemptive act, and that, of all people, he would be the one to treat her like a Godly woman should be treated. After all, not only was he a deacon, his uncle, her brother-in-law, was a minister. The titles alone were enough to garner her loyalty and trust their judgment. Unfortunately, not long after that, the relationship would end due to infidelities on his part. One day, while driving down the street, she stopped at a traffic signal and happened to be right next to her ex-fiancé. He asked if he could see her, and it was at that point that Cathy agreed to meet him at a friend's apartment. She was excited about the possibility of reconciling the broken relationship. What followed was a brutal beating, accompanied by date rape, and the conception of a child. Again, Cathy moved onward with her life, all the while internalizing the trauma. As if a physical move would help in relieving the pain, she moved to Atlanta.

Cathy returned to the church and subsequently got married to a minister who ended up beating her too. She eventually got divorced but remained in the church. It was at this time that she noticed that the men of the church, particularly the clergy, started treating her as if she was wearing a scarlet letter. Although the clergy knew about the domestic violence that had taken place, no one ever spoke about it. When she asked that leadership of the church to bless her new home, after the divorce, they showed up and commenced to perform some type of ritual in the home that mirrored an exorcism. As if this wasn't enough, the last straw came when she was singing in the choir one Sunday, and the time for prayer was coming up. She was totally outdone as she watched him approach the pulpit to offer prayer for the church. That was enough for Cathy to finally leave the church. Her ex-husband eventually became Pastor of that church.

Like Tamar, Cathy would say that she became a desolate woman after this experience – even surviving a suicide attempt. The trauma caused her to swear off men, as she found it easier to develop intimate relationships with women. The devastating experience was further compounded by the fact that her family did not offer her the solace that she needed when she shared the experience with them. Her older sister, who was married to a minister, was too attached to her traditional role as a minister's wife to offer Cathy the love and support that she needed. It took a long time and lot of forgiveness for Cathy to embrace God's healing power.

The stories of Tamar and Cathy, while centuries apart, speak to the universal pain associated with sexual violence, and to the attitudes of “godly” men who perpetrate or are complicit in these offenses. Remember, according to the Bible, King David, Tamar's father, was said to be “a man after God's own heart.” This alone, paints the picture that

God condones, or at least ignores the rape of women – a concept which I'll explore later in the chapter. Tamar and Cathy were both raped, shamed, and discarded. Cathy was left to find her own way to some semblance of peace and reconciliation within, and we never hear about Tamar again after the tragic incident. In both cases, the perpetrators never took an ounce of responsibility and never figured into the justice equation for either woman. This is a highly traumatic experience when enacted by anyone, but the devastation is multiplied when the perpetration and the response from “godly” men, supports and magnifies the environment in which the violence takes place.

The Silence of the Church

At our best we clergy think we are sensitive to the issue of domestic violence because we are sympathetic to victims. At our worst we ourselves are perpetrators of violence through our preaching and our behavior.

- Rev. Joan Ishibashi, Minister in the United Church of Christ and Associate Conference Minister for Administration and Resources, Honolulu, Hawaii²⁶

For the most part, the church still remains conspicuously silent on the issue of domestic violence, rape, and sexual assault. Whether intended or intended, silence is often synonymous with complicity. Unfortunately, for many victims of these heinous crimes, the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. will remain, even after the healing process has been actively engaged and the perpetrator brought to justice. *“In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”*²⁷

In the earlier accounts of Tamar and Cathy, not only did the perpetrator abandon the victims, but justice further eluded the women when the significant men in their lives

²⁶ Al Miles, *Domestic Violence: What Every Pastor Needs to Know* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 1.

²⁷ Martin Luther King, Jr., “*Loving Your Enemies*,” Sermon delivered at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery, Alabama, 17 November 1957.

unexpected emergency had arisen, I was told. Curiously, these “emergencies” rarely occurred when I spoke on other topics.

If the mere *presence* of a loving and supportive individual can make a difference for someone experiencing trauma, then I have to believe that the *absence* of supportive individuals can send a strong message as well. The resistance of clergy members to gain information and receive training in the area of family and domestic violence can be interpreted as actions that condone the behaviors of perpetrators. Ironically, the condoning of the violent behaviors of men is nothing new, biblically speaking. In addition to Tamar’s experience in 2 Samuel 13, there are other instances in the Bible where women are not only raped, but that rape is condoned. And when interpreted by misogynistic men, one might assume that men’s acceptance of rape is synonymous with God’s intention. Following are a few scriptural references that give indications that rape was common and acceptable. Perhaps the attitudes of today’s clergy remain rooted in the consciousness that produced these scriptures.

If a man happens to meet a virgin who is not pledged to be married and rapes her and they are discovered, he shall pay the girl’s father fifty shekels of silver. He must marry the girls, for he has violated her. He can never divorce her as long as he lives. **Deuteronomy 22:22-29**

Watch, for the day of the Lord is coming when your possessions will be plundered right in front of you! I will gather all the nations to fight against Jerusalem. The city will be taken, the houses looted, and the women raped. Half the population will be taken into captivity, and the rest will be left among the ruins of the city. **Zechariah 14:1-2**

“Here, take my virgin daughter and this man’s concubine. I will bring them out to you, and you can abuse them and do whatever you like. But don’t do such a shameful thing to this man.” But they wouldn’t listen to him. So the Levite took hold of his concubine and pushed her out the door. The men of the town abused her all night, taking turns raping her until morning. Finally, at dawn they let her go. At daybreak the woman returned to the house where her husband was staying. She collapsed at the door of the house and lay there until it was light. **Judges 19: 24-26**

While the actions indicated by the above scriptures might be outdated in our society, the consciousness that underlies these actions cannot be as easily dismissed. While considering all the reasons why the clergy were noticeably absent from the conferences and presentations given by Reverend Al Miles, I had to consider that *godly* men, still rooted in religious traditionalism, were aligned, in their perceptions about women, with those who authored the above scriptures. In a further attempt to understand the religious roots of violence towards women, I interviewed Pastor D.E. Paulk, Senior Pastor of Spirit & Truth Sanctuary, A Radically Inclusive Spiritual Community in Decatur, GA. Spirit and Truth Sanctuary, unlike traditionally-minded churches, is spiritually located within New Thought Christianity.²⁸ What follows is an excerpt of that interview in a question and answer format. (For the full interview see Appendix C.)

Q: *This is Pastor D E Paulk of Spirit and Truth Sanctuary in Decatur. I just want to ask you a couple of questions. You know we've been talking about the message of inclusion and it kind of goes in line with what I'm doing in school in too. We're talking about how scripture has been used to oppress and suppress, and in this case, we're talking about the suppression of women and then maybe eventual violence towards women and so I just thought it was good to talk to you because you've been in church almost in your whole life, as well as generations of your family. So just a few questions and then we can just talk briefly. So as one who's been in the church your entire life, how have you seen that biblical*

²⁸ BeliefNet, "New Thought," <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Christianity/New-Thought/Index.aspx> (accessed April 24, 2016).

language has been used sometimes to suppress others, but particularly women in the church?

A: It's so prevalent that it's almost hidden because it becomes common culture. The common story is of Eve being the one that tempted her husband and so the curse of man supposedly coming through Eve to the Old Testament stories of what a woman's worth is and they actually give a figure of shekels and even say that a younger woman is worth more shekels than an older woman. You know, if you follow that on through, there's really only one book, well two, the book of Ruth and Esther, neither that were necessarily authored by women, but sort of about women. The scourge of Mary Magdalene never being accepted by the other apostles or disciples, yet being arguably the closest to Jesus. Peter refused her, the Council of Nicea refusing her gospel, so it's, you know, part of a different set of gospels. It's been common language that bled into modern church culture where women from Paul's teaching were to be silent in church. At some point they were allowed to sing in church, but could not teach. A woman should be silent in church, if she has a question, she should ask her husband at home, "For I will not suffer a woman to teach me," is Paul's doctrine. It turned into modern church culture, even when a woman was obviously anointed to teach or preach, they would never call them Pastor or Reverend or Preacher, they would call them church mother, mother so-and-so, mother this, mother that. Finally they would say prophetess a little bit but the oppression has been so prevalent

that it has almost gone unnoticed because it's just been such a part of our common culture, very familiar.

Q: *Wow. When you look at that, I mean you spoke of it a little bit, playing out in the church, I was talking with men yesterday, and we were talking about coming up in our different traditions and mentioned that women mainly being Sunday school teachers when I grew up. Have you seen changes in the course of your ministry and if so, what changes have you seen as far as women's participation in church? Have you seen any changes in titles, or their inclusion in this whole message? What changes have you seen in your years?*

A: *Sure, yeah. There's been some significant strides. There are now, in some denominations, women who are the Senior Pastor of the church. There's a specific denomination that has a woman as their Senior Pastor, but the denomination said we wouldn't recognize you as part of us if you don't take her out and put a man in. The local church said, "She is our pastor and you can take us out of the denomination if you must."*

Q: *This is recent?*

A: *This is in the past couple of years at a large church. If I said the name, you might be familiar with it. There is still some waging of which consciousness are we going to fall into. But you see some uprising, even if it's in local churches saying we're not going to be bound by these ancient doctrines of men. They're evil.*

Q: When you have heard about and read about stories that are prevalent in the Bible and, you know, it's so common when you see or hear about women being the spoils of war or rape that takes place in the Bible, would you say, from your perspective, that also plays into how women are seen in the church and the culture of oppression, even outside the church? When you see these things about rape and how women are treated, do you think that plays into men's consciousness as they lead the church?

A: Well not only from a Biblical perspective, but just from a religious perspective in general. That plays into the treatment, the denigration of women, the abuse, and it all goes back to the literal mind. Paul has a teaching in, 1 Corinthians 3 that says, "The letter," and that word comes from the root there the literal, "The literal kills but the spirit gives life." And whether is Christianity, whether it is more in the news today is Islam, of radical groups as part of their taking over an area, they see the women as part of their prize and they become sex slaves or whatever they want to use them for. But that, all that comes back from literal interpretations of, not God's word to man, but man's word about God, that we call either the Bible, the Quran, the Bhagavad Gita, they are man's attempt to understand God but coming through a lot of culture and opinion. But, yeah, some of them written 3,000, 2,000 years ago, it's still that language, that culture, that ancient archaic culture is still oppressing in modern day because of the literal minds who can't update their religion with the way

that, not God is changing, but man's changing ideas. Hopefully, you know, better ideas about God.

Q: And you've seen, because I know you've done extensive traveling around the world, I'm assuming that you've seen that in different variations?

A: Yeah. My uncle, my predecessor had a very close confidant and contemporary who pastored the largest church in Nigeria in Africa and he died unexpectedly, and so there was some jockeying for position and who was going to take his position. We flew over to Nigeria and put his wife in place as the new Archbishop of that church, which she was the first ordained consecrated Bishop in the country of Nigeria and, you know, we flew over and did, we came back to America, then she had to deal with the people's opinions, the men fighting her and even the women fighting her. She got it from both sides. The men didn't want her there, the women thought she was overstepping her boundary, but only history will tell what that will do for women in the country of Nigeria.

Q: What would you suggest for men who are coming in to church, where people are still literal and read the Bible and look to scripture for their authority? I know what you do here, but what would you suggest for men who are reading these things in the Bible, who are literal as to how to read the Bible and how to interpret, as you talked about Paul and then we talk about what's in the Bible and even the fact that Jesus, in his actions, was different towards women than what was the common norm at that

time. When you look at Jesus how would you comment on the way Jesus treated women?

A: Well you see a little of a dichotomy. Hebrews 5... "in the days of His flesh". When Jesus was still encumbered, a little bit unconscious of the greater divinity that was about to shine through Him, there was still some culturalism, some tribalism that was happening, some chauvinism that was happening in there. He refers to His mother at some points as just "woman", you know, "Woman, I have nothing to do with you". That's not only His ego talking, some of that is His culture talking... "Why is this woman", "Who is my mother", "Who is my father", you know, some of that is coming through. But there's also some moments where He is approached by women of other nations, other cultures and He says to them, "A woman should not approach," but then later you see this evolution happening in Him where He is with the Samaritan woman at the well, at Jacob's well and she tries to go back into that consciousness, you know, "Jews just don't speak to Samaritans, women don't speak to men". And He said, "The hour is coming when all those labels are about to fall off and we're going to be seen truly as a divine family." So as Jesus progressed, Hebrews 5... "having been perfected", He became the author of eternal salvation. We must be perfected, the men in churches, the men that are reading literal, the men that are trapped in culture as Jesus was, must graduate from that literalism into the Christ anointed, awakened mind that knows that the Bible is a guide to man, but that the Bible is not

infallible and that's a big hurdle for many people. It was written by men to men and the Spirit of God does find its way into the pages, but we must rightly divide between what's opinion, what's culture, and what really is eternal truth. But there's a scripture that says, "Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing, transformed by the renewing of the mind." Men who are trapped in ancient archaic teachings about women and the keeping of a woman in her place, there's no transformation happening because their mind is not being constantly renewed. That's what made Jesus special is He learned His culture, but He was constantly, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds," there's a constant proceeding Word that sometimes religion doesn't make place for.

***Q:** Just a couple more questions. What would you suggest also, would you suggest for women who are coming in? There are many women who are still under that same consciousness, who come up in church and believe that is still their place? And certainly there are those who are part of the feminist movement. What would you suggest for women who are trying to come out from under that yoke and pursue ministry now?*

***A:** My exhortation would be just to think generationally. This is not really God's plan for your daughters, for your granddaughters. The first, as we call, I don't know that I believe in generational curses, but sometimes there's a breaker of a cycle that is a cycle of consciousness and whether that's being the first that graduates with a degree in your family, the first*

that starts their own business...there's many firsts in families, but, you know, as a woman, even if it's the tradition or the cycle, the vicious cycle in your family, there is enough strength within each of us to be the breaker of that cycle. And there's not going to be a lot of thanksgiving accolades or praise given to the breaker of it, the praise will come from the other generations that look back and say, "I, as a woman, cannot be a doctor, I would not have been a lawyer, a preacher, a pastor, a politician, a business entrepreneur, a television mogul, had it not been for my mother who showed me I could be just as good as a man. I could be everything that God has called me to be."

***Q:** In some of the readings I've done, I've looked back and when you talk about images and look at some of the original concepts or images of God, I've read some things that suggest that within the original images of God, there was a feminine aspect. Would you say that the reason that changed is because patriarchy took over and these original images of goddesses and prophetesses are different now? Without knowing the specific time, what's one reason you can pinpoint as to why that changed or was suppressed?*

***A:** Well even in the effort to suppress the idea of the feminine aspects of God, with our best attempts, with man's best attempt, it still bleeds through, you know. We see in the...even in the first chapter of Genesis, "Let us make man in our image." It doesn't say let us make male in our...and then, you know in the book of Genesis, you have two different*

creation stories. One story I refer to as man's story and one that's a more divine story. The male aspect of that is Adam or male was made first. Well Adam was not male or female, Adam was man, mankind, human, but that the woman came out of the man and so she must now be subservient to the man because the man came...the male came first. But there's another Genesis story that I believe is more of divine inspiration, that is "they" were created, God made "them", blessed them, gave them the great commission. And so even in the midst of man trying to suppress it, as you said, there still is these little moments where you go how did that slip through there? How did the second creation story slip through that says God created them? Told "them" to take dominion and, you know, be fruitful and multiply. So, yeah, I mean it's common, it's still around today. Its insecurities, it's man's desire to control, but it's getting better. It is, it's on the way.

Q: Last question. Personally, how did you, being in ministry for so many years with so many generations in front of you, how did you move to inclusion? If you can speak briefly as to how it was that you made your move towards inclusion?

A: To inclusion as it affects women?

Q: Yes, women and inclusion, particularly women, but also as an inclusionary pastor.

A: You know there's a pattern that you see, not just in Scripture but in society that is all tending toward inclusion. I think it was Dr. King talked

*about the moral arch of the universe, it is long, but it tends or bends, curves toward justice. You might not be able to see it because it's so long, but eventually...and I have seen that tendency, whether it was the emancipation of slaves, whether it was women's rights, now, you know, gay rights, it never seems to end, immigrants. It's a non-ending cycle of human's learning one little lesson at a time, which is a little frustrating because we could have learned it all at one time, whether it were the lesson of racism, the lesson of gender equality. We could have learned all of that at one time, but we have to keep learning...got to learn about slavery, now we got to learn about woman, now we got to learn about gay people, now we got to learn about religious differences. You know, it seems to be a really an...there's an old movie titled *The Gods Must be Crazy* and it's saying we must be crazy because we've been given this divine, creative power, but the way that we willed that power is not always for the benefit of all. And so in my journey it was...there was some experiences I had, some dreams that I had where I felt like there were some divine ideas coming to me. Seeing people of different color, different races, different backgrounds, different gender, different sexual orientations and recognizing the good in them, what I would call the Christ in them. How can I deny, you know, this person is gifted, this person is loving, this person is caring, this person has a love for God, yet religion would tell me they are flawed, they are somehow not as worthy. So there's a crisis in all of our walks, whether we hear it or not and every*

literalist at some point will come into a crisis with this, the crisis of their family, the crisis of the contradiction of Scripture that is completely contradicts it in different places. And so as the literal dies and did die in my life, the Spirit became alive, you know, and it's been living and breathing and having its way and being in me and getting me in trouble ever since.

The above interview does well in bringing attention to the consciousness that has historically undergirded the treatment of women in the Christian church. Just as thoughts become words, and words become actions, so it is that consciousness, gives way to scriptural language that becomes embedded in the religious mind. In this case, language repeated throughout the centuries became *gospel* for many.

Biblical Language

Biblical language, including the reference to God as a *father* and *He*, accounts for much of the justification men use to abuse women and children. While many men would deny this, it is helpful to revisit Robert McAfee Brown's words as he recounted the progression of his own understanding as it related to violence. He stated the following as he was preparing his second edition of *Religion and Violence*.

There is one form of violence, however, to which I was oblivious during the original writing that now stares at me from the text and makes me both embarrassed and penitent. That is the degree of my employment of sexist language, which is an act of violence (in the basic meaning of a "violation of personhood") against women readers and, because of the false world it depicts, against men as well.²⁹

²⁹ Robert McAfee Brown, *Religion and Violence*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), viii.

The notion that God is *male* is just as disturbing and damaging as the notion that God is *white*. Language, as well as images, is adopted by those who relish power to exert control over their victims by aligning themselves with an authoritative God. James Newton Poling, in *The Abuse of Power: A Theological Problem*, states how this power can be used as justification for the abuse of women and children.

For some victims, abusers used God to justify their behaviors. One perpetrator told his son that he was “beating the devil out of him,” and said God would not accept a little boy who did not obey his father. Another perpetrator told his daughter that oral sex was her punishment for refusing to come in by curfew and that “by God, I am your father.”

For others, abusers’ allusions to God were indirect. Phrases such as, “I am your father. You should do it because I said so” or “This is something all fathers teach their children,” implied that parental authority cannot be questioned. Since parents serve with god-like power in the lives of children, the implication, in the mind of a child, was that abuse was part of the order of things that included God.

In some cases, victims of abuse experienced confusion because the church made specific analogies between God and fathers when supporting parental authority.

Poling also reports that many victims found it difficult to make a distinction between the abuse and their images of God. Consequently, you can imagine that any woman who has experienced sexual abuse at the hands of her father, might have a hard time worshipping or submitting to *Father God*.

Reverend Shaheerah Stephens, Pastor of Transforming Love Community, recalls her experience with her own father and the challenge to reconcile that image with the image of *father* God. As a little girl, she remembers being taught that God was a male – to be referred to as *Father God*. The difficulty with the image arose from having a strained relationship with her father. Her father was not dependable and couldn’t be trusted. Therefore, it was challenging to embrace the promises of a God that was deemed

father. She also saw God as someone to be feared and someone who would be quick to punish, mainly due to her father's effort to instill fear in his children. The physical attacks incurred by her mother at the hand of her father, only served to crystallize the image of God as a violent presence to be feared, who was primed to punish at any given moment. It took years and the help of counseling for Rev. Shaheerah to awaken to the damaging perceptions created when God is seen solely as a *male* and a *father*. She experienced her healing as she began to refer to and experience God as more than just a *father*. Initially, she began to refer to God as *Mother God* and/or *Mother-Father God* – a reference which was easier due to her loving relationship with her mother. Ultimately, she began to see God as pure Spirit, a loving presence which was neither male nor female. While some may have always seen God as genderless, Rev. Shaheerah's story and similar stories from other women, give indication of how injurious the teaching of a gendered God can be.

The scope of the violence emanating from our images of God is widespread. Whether it's physical, emotional, psychological, or economic, the violence perpetrated by religion can span centuries and do generational damage. The great thinker, religious teacher, anti-violence educator, Jiddu Krishnamurti³⁰ reminds us that violence has many faces and can take many forms. He also reminds us of the deep work that remains to be done to eliminate violence.

Violence is not merely killing another. It is violence when we use a sharp word, when we make a gesture to brush away a person, when we obey because there is fear. So violence isn't merely organized butchery in the name of God, in the name of society or country. Violence is much more subtle, much deeper.³¹

³⁰ J. Krishnamurti, "An Overview of Krishnamurti's Life and Work," <http://www.jkrishnamurti.org/about-krishnamurti/biography.php>

³¹ Quotes Gram, "Jiddu Krishnamurti Quotes," <http://quotesgram.com/jiddu-krishnamurti-quotes> (accessed April 24, 2016).

CHAPTER 2 PATRIARCHY, PRIVILEGE, AND POWER

*Patriarchy is the single most life threatening social disease
assaulting the male body and spirit in our nation*
– bell hooks

It should not come as a surprise to discover that most men have no idea what the word *patriarchy* means. From a feminist perspective, men's ignorance of the word is confirmation of a society that is built on patriarchal values. Patriarchy can be defined as a "social system in which the role of the male as the primary authority figure is central to social organization, and where fathers hold authority over women, children, and property. It implies the institutions of male rule and privilege, and is dependent on female subordination."³² This fact that many men are unaware of the word, gives support to the notion that those who create and maintain a system that thrives off dominance, do not have to concern themselves with the collateral impact of its existence, particularly when that system benefits them. Not all men, however, are intentional in patriarchy's application. It is important to remember that patriarchy is a system and therefore the urge to indict all men in its prevalence would be misguided. It is not unreasonable to assume that many men unconsciously participate in this system while simultaneously considering themselves to be fair and equitable human beings. Hence, that is the very nature of patriarchy - it is so heavily embedded into the fabric of our social order that males and females make conscious and unconscious decisions everyday that support the oppressive

³² <http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Patriarchy.html>, s.v. "patriarchy."

values of patriarchy. These everyday, practical decisions are often born out of the gender rules and roles that patriarchy demands.

I was recently informed of a situation that my wife encountered as she was assisting her friend in caring for her new-born baby. In the attempt to ease the burden for the new parents, my wife was cooking dinner for the couple. Meanwhile, the mother was steeped in preparations for the upcoming Christening for the baby, while the husband played with his newborn son in the newly acquired swing set. Unavoidably, my wife began to hear the rumblings of concern between husband and wife as it related to the immediate well-being of the new-born. The conversation that followed is a stark example of the gender roles that patriarchy assumes. Names have been changed out of respect for the parents. “Angela, I’m noticing that when the baby is in his swing, he sweats. You need to put a towel behind his head so that the sweat doesn’t get on his clothes, making his clothes all wet. We need to put a towel behind him, Angela.” “Okay Shawn”, Angela responded. A short time later, in the midst of her intense preparations, Angela stopped what she was doing, searched for a towel, put it behind the baby and ensured that he was comfortable. In the meantime, Shawn just sat there waiting for Angela to attend to the baby’s needs. When she finished, he resumed playing with his son. In the time that it took for Angela to stop what she was doing, get the towel, and put it behind the baby, Shawn could have attended to the baby’s needs in less time than it took her to do so. This occurrence, which was highly consistent with other evidence of patriarchal privilege in the relationship, is a stark example of not only how gender roles persist, but also how patriarchal expectations fail to consider the labor of women. Indeed, as creators of the

rules in a patriarchal society, men retain the privilege of not having to be aware of the impact that privilege has on others.

In the above example, Shawn has the privilege of not even being remotely aware of the patriarchal standards that are at work. As Allan G. Johnson points out in *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy*,

A key to maintaining male privilege is to devalue women by making them and what they do invisible. This happens, for example, when cleaning the house and taking care of children is viewed as nonwork or when a woman's ideas are ignored, only to be noticed and adopted when suggested by a man.³³

Shawn assumed that taking care of the baby's needs was categorized as *nonwork* for Angela, simply because that was what she was supposed to do as a mother. Meanwhile, he also maintained the assumption that for him to take care of the baby's needs was *work*. Child-rearing, within the family, is full of glaring examples of how patriarchal standards govern the way in which men view the roles of a parent. I'm reminded of a married couple who happen to be dear friends of mine. On one particular occasion, I asked the husband, who was also a coworker of mine, if he might be able to hang out after work, which was the usual custom on Friday after work for many of the staff. John, as we'll call him, begrudgingly reported to us that he could not go out with us because he had to *babysit* his four children that afternoon because his wife, who usually takes on that responsibility, had a prior engagement she had to attend. Only now, does the reality of that statement impress upon me the utter imbalance that patriarchy produces. I also know that it is due to my own acceptance of these standards that allowed me to ignore oppression that such standards engender. John actually believed, or made himself believe,

³³ Allan G. Johnson, *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014), 145.

that for him to watch his own children was considered *babysitting*. The absurdity of the statement further underscores these concepts of *work/nonwork* and *visibility/invisibility* in a patriarchal society. And unfortunately, women do not have the privilege of defining the rules of the boundaries. That right is reserved for men, as that is the advantage they have by operating in a system characterized by male dominance.

Male dominance ensures that men hold the positions of authority in political, economic, legal, religious, educational, military, and domestic realms. Under a system of patriarchy, corporate CEOs, religious leaders, school principals, heads of state, and those who are considered heads of household, are all positions that are typically reserved for men. In the event that a woman holds one of those positions, she is often considered an exception to the rule and her success continues to be measured by male standards. As Allan Johnson points out when speaking of these double standards, men rarely have to face the same scrutiny...

It is a test rarely applied to men (“I wonder if he’ll be as good a president as a woman would be”) except, perhaps, when men take on the devalued domestic and other caring work typically done by women, such as child care and housework or caring for an elderly parent. Even then, men’s failure to measure up can be interpreted as a sign of superiority, a trained incapacity that actually protects their privileged status (“You change the diaper; I’m no good at that”).³⁴

This same standard is clearly evident in areas of income and wealth as the balance of power is always tipped in a man’s favor. The very fact that the average man working full-time makes 30 percent more than the average woman, gives a clear glimpse as to whose work is valued more. In spite of the fact that the majority of college graduates are women, they continue to lag behind men by occupying low-status, low-paid occupations.

³⁴ Ibid., 6.

Even when women begin to occupy positions that are traditionally held by men, they still find themselves in lower-ranking and lower-paid positions. Simultaneously, men who occupy positions traditionally held by women, such as nursing and teaching, are still more highly paid than comparable women and are more likely to advance to leadership positions. The same disparities exist in politics as women make up just 19 percent of the U.S. Congress, in spite of being over 50 percent of the population. In our universities, particularly in the area of science, female students are seen as less competent than their male counterparts and are less likely to be offered jobs. And despite being the backbone of the modern church, women continue to suffer extreme amounts of oppression within the church. In fact, while many of the previously mentioned institutions continue to develop covert methods in which to discriminate against women, the church remains to be one of those institutions that engage in the overt oppression of women by denying them positions of power and leadership within its ranks.

Biblical Patriarchy

Before delving into how patriarchy reveals itself within the Christian church, it is helpful to understand what *biblical patriarchy* is specifically. Vision Forum, an evangelical Christian organization sets forth the following as the “Tenets of Biblical Patriarchy.”

- *God reveals Himself as masculine, not feminine.*
- *God ordained distinct gender roles for man and woman as part of the created order*
- *A husband and father is the head of his household, a family leader, provider and protector.*

- *Male leadership in the home carries over into the church: only men are permitted to hold the ruling office in the church. A God-honoring society will likewise prefer male leadership in civil and other spheres.*
- *Since the woman was created as a helper to her husband, as bearer of children, and as a “keeper at home”, the God-ordained and proper sphere of dominion for a wife is the household and that which is connected to the home.*
- *Christian parents must provide their children with a thoroughly Christian education, one that teaches the Bible and the biblical view of God and the world.*
- *Both sons and daughters are under the command of their fathers as long as they are under his roof or otherwise the recipients of his provision and protection*
- *The age-integrated communities of family and church are the God-ordained institutions for training and socialization and as such provide the preferred pattern for social life and educational endeavors.³⁵*

With these tenets as a background, we can now look at the face of patriarchy within the church and the challenges it has presented for men and women alike. While this understanding of biblical patriarchy is promoted by an evangelical Christian organization, these tenets also bleed into other traditions of Christianity.

Nineteenth century author and political activist, Helen H. Gardener³⁶ once said,

“This religion and the Bible require of women everything, and give her nothing. They ask her support and her love, and repay her with contempt and oppression.”³⁷

³⁵ Vision Forum Ministries, “The Tenets of Biblical Patriarchy,” <https://homeschoolersanonymous.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/the-tenets-of-biblical-patriarchy-vision-forum-ministries.pdf> (accessed April 24, 2016).

³⁶ Freedom From Religion Foundation, “Helen H. Gardener,” <https://ffrf.org/news/day/dayitems/item/14154-helen-h-gardener> (accessed April 24, 2016).

³⁷ AZ Quotes, “Helen H. Gardener Quotes.”

It is no coincidence that while women have long been the *backbone* of the church, they continued to be treated like a mere *rib* within the operation of that church. The reality of that truth brings in to question the authority of the woman's creation story found in the book of Genesis 2: 21-23:

21: So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the Lord God took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the opening. 22: Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man. 23: "At last!" the man exclaimed. "This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh! She will be called 'woman' because she was taken from man."

Despite all of the advances that women have made in every arena of society, the church remains as a bastion of patriarchy. So embedded is patriarchy in its fabric, the gender roles in many churches have remained consistent throughout the centuries. In recalling the roles of women in the church I grew up in, the role of Sunday School Teacher sticks out. Women were permitted to teach and be the caretakers of children, but they were certainly not allowed to *preach to* nor *pray for* the congregation. In the attempt to uncover whether this was a phenomenon of the Baptist church alone, I initiated some dialogue with some men from Spirit and Truth Sanctuary in Decatur, GA. While Spirit and Truth Sanctuary now identifies itself as a radically inclusive spiritual community, its history is rooted in the Pentecostal movement, so many of the members are now embracing New Thought Christianity. The church currently has members that have roots in various denominations – many of which were indoctrinated with traditional interpretations of the bible that were often sexist and patriarchal in nature. What follows is an excerpt from a dialogue I had with 3 men who had been heavily indoctrinated with religious patriarchy, but were now attempting to embrace a more inclusive perspective as it relates to women in the church. The dialogue is contained within a question/answer

format. I was the questioner (Q) and the participants are noted as A1, A2, and A3, respectively.

Q: Growing up, how did you see gender roles actualized in the home or in the church? How did you see women treated in the church? What roles did you see them in? What were you taught, from a religious standpoint, about women?

A1: I grew up Missionary Baptist Church. Typically a woman would be called a missionary. She could be an elder but she couldn't have the role of a pastor, and even if she did have more of a teaching ministry or preaching ministry, she still had to maintain the title of a missionary or maybe even an evangelist. But then she couldn't have her own church, even if she was the predominant speaker. She still had to be married to maybe a bishop or a pastor.

A1: Even though she was the one who handled the crux of the preaching and administrative duties, it couldn't be her church. It had to be his church and she was just basically in that role.

A1: And I heard a lot of the teachings about women are to be silent in church. So they could only go so far even though you clearly could see that this was this woman's church and she had the anointing for ministry in that church.

A1: But her husband basically sat there quietly and he was the pastor of the church.

A1: So I saw that a lot and as times have changed, it's a little different. A lot of times they will still let her be the pastor but then her husband has to be the senior pastor or the bishop.

A1: But I see that. A lot of women that I knew in those circles, they kind of left the church and kind of became independent or joined up with another group so that they could fulfill their role as the pastor of the church.

A1: So I saw that a lot.

A2: Mine was Southern Baptist. Well, my grandparents raised me Southern Baptist and similar. Only difference is, their women did not have a particular role. They were on the church Mother Board.

A2: The deacons ran and oversaw anything the Mother Board did or a church organization did. The pastor had a, let's say, chauvinist role. He got a Cadillac every year. He had two churches.

A1: Mine drove a Lincoln.

A2: So I mean, that was my initial upbringing and understanding. And the pastor, he could do no wrong. Although figuratively he could do no wrong, his morals weren't always the same way, so.

A2: So that made me...this is how I saw things. You saw a man in a role and at that time, the pastor went to dinner at the deacon's homes after church.

A3: And they did the big meals?

A2: Yes. Therefore, the chicken...the big piece of chicken went to him.

A3: He got it first. The head of the household.

A2: And the kids had the smaller table out in the den

A2: So you had to...you knew this role. So that's what...and the women were the servants, although they had the power and they were the majority in the church.

A2: They did not have the leadership roles, as you said before.

A3: I was actually married to, as you said, a minister. She was a lady and it was odd because the pastor was anointed, highly anointed. But every role that the women had in the church was pretty much to be submissive to the man.

A3: I mean, literally be submissive. If he had sweat on his brow, they would jump off and wipe the sweat off his brow. You know, it's to the point to where he, as you said, he couldn't do any wrong. And that's what was taught in the church. And I'm from Louisiana where you have different...I'll say you may have four churches on the street.

A3: Each one of them may be different in some aspect where you have one preaching, he'd get a Cadillac. He'd get a brand new car, brand new house.

A3: The churches provided everything for you.

A3: Anything that he says, even if the congregation knew it's wrong, they're going to support him because they're mindset is, "He can't do any wrong."

A3: "He's anointed by God."

A3: "God is guiding this man." Now he's a human being...he has an affair, he has a kid. You know, he's doing everything – I say an everyday man but...a fleshly man does.

A3: But they're acknowledging him as he being almost above God. Because he can't do any wrong.

A3: And it's just...it's crazy. I mean, now that I can sit back and think back to that time...and you weren't taught to challenge him.

A3: Anything and everything he said. That was it. That was the law.

A3: So even if you had a difference in opinion, and a lot of people, as I said where I'm from, you have four churches. So they left one church and went to the church right down the street, which was just almost the same, just maybe a little bit more leeway to the women

A3: They all would preach. The pastor would start off saying one or two things and he'd say, "Okay, well, so-and-so is going to say some words for today." And that'd be the rest of the service. He would never move. And again, he could be sitting in the pew – a row of chairs – he'd sweat. They'd jump up. These are the women...I mean, he could do this himself.

A3: If he's at the podium and someone saw a piece of paper fall, somebody would jump off the front row, grab the piece of paper almost before it hit the floor.

A3: So it's...for me, I'm enjoying my life now because I'm being educated.

A3: I'm always curious, so I'm being educated now. And that's – that is helpful to me.

A2: And we have evolved and I'm sure here in this spiritual community where we are now, we know that we have evolved, not to the extreme, but we saw it many times in the old building, in the cathedral, we saw a lot of that same stuff.

A2: Even though we had a female pastor on staff, I saw guys actually have their brows wiped and shoes tied in the pulpit.

A2: And I said, you know, and I really actually still had that same psychological thought behind a man of God being... like God.

A2: Because he could do no wrong, I had put my family into...I was telling my son, I said, "I was so crazy that I put...I would not do anything unless I found out it was okay with the bishop.

A2: And I thought that was crazy. And I really, seriously...

A2: I said, now I look back and I say man, what was I thinking? I couldn't be my own...I had to ask a man of God or think that if he did it or if he said it –

A1: I was like that-

A2: I remember so vividly telling my kids on the way home in the car and they even laugh at me now. "Bishop said..."

A3: So that was your law. That was your law of the house.

A2: That's how we're going to do it. And I just realized that...religious leaders...

Q: You know, and with that said, I'm Missionary Baptist, so it was the same, whether Detroit or Georgia, Missionary Baptists are the same. You

know, they're the same way. So the women weren't in the pulpit. They were all my Sunday School teachers growing up.

A3: Oh definitely. They were definitely that. That was their role.

Q: And then they ran the Missionary Society. You know, they were the nurses and stuff like that.

A1: They could preach on women or something like that.

A3: Yeah, they did – because women could consider all female things.

A3: Well, I'm sorry. What we were taught when we were younger as being a female thing.

A3: Because now that we have evolved, we know better now.

A3: We didn't know any better. We went by what someone told us, whether it was the elder person who grew up, again – listening to everything that the minister said and all they did was pass it on to us.

A3: So that's all that we were doing.

A3: So that's why I said, we're blessed in the sense of being able to think for ourselves now.

Q: How people can be in a church or in a system, whether it's at work or whether it's church or whatever, know something is wrong, but still act within this system – a system that indoctrinated you to be aggressive? How do you turn that off when you're in a relationship?

Q: How is it, even though you know...how is it affecting you when you get home? How does it affect your relationship?

A2: It's actually funny because I was thinking, man, because it's scripture. In scripture, you know, and it's almost shameful to think about it. You know, you quote Scriptures, especially men

A2: You know, we'll quote the first part of the Scripture.

A3: That's right.

A1: That's right, yep.

[talking over each other]

A2: "Women, submit yourselves to your husband." And we'll stop there.

A2: I remember using this. I'm going to be vulnerable and say I did this. Y'all see Mary and y'all laugh at me.

A2: So that's the crux of it. That's what you knew, what was preached to you. You just imitate what you already heard from the pulpit.

A2: And God said, "Women, submit yourselves to your husbands."

A2: And he don't go no further than that.

A1: No, that's it.

A2: Remember, I was Southern Baptist, Missionary Baptist – when I first came here was the first time I heard pages turn in the Bible.

A2: You used to be in the cathedral, you would hear it when the Bishop would preach. You would hear pages turning.

A2: You're like, "Oh, they're reading."

A2: But where I was raised, it wasn't a read. It was a telling.

A2: They'd tell you exactly what the Scripture was – they'd tell you. And in my grandmother's church – it was so crazy. I don't know if he could

even read. The pastor would have a woman...he had a woman. He's say, "Read!" And she would read all that scripture.

A3: That is so true. That is exactly how they did it. That could be true why a lot of pastors...they could not read.

A2: And that's not funny, but that's deep.

A3: That is so true, though. Now I'm thinking that is so true because he always...the pastor himself never touched the Bible.

A3: The Bible sat at the end of the pulpit, throughout the whole service. Throughout whatever was in the church.

A3: He would come there. He had one person, whether it be a man or a woman, do the reading. And once they read, he would speak from that...his interpretation of it. Not what the church would get or not what each member would get, but his interpretation.

A3: And if you're following that minister, what he said pretty much, that's like planting a seed. He done planted a seed. Now you may not have ever thought about it like that, but once he planted that seed, "Oh, oh, I never thought about it like that."

A3: One thing could happen...

A3: To bring something home similar to what he just said, "He was so right." You know, back when you used to be like, "That don't sound right!" when you were first here. "That don't sound right. Why would he tell me that?" "That's my wife. Why would I...no." One thing sounds similar to what he said, so..."I knew it...girl you don't know what you're

talking about. Pastor said this, this, and this.” You know, you’re attacking your wife and you don’t even know it.

The above dialogue speaks perfectly to the privilege that exists within a patriarchal system. In a male-dominated system, particularly the church, the privilege to interpret the rules – in this case the scriptures – rests with the pastor, bishop, or other name given to the head of the church. And when the leader places himself as the interpreter of *God’s Word*, most of the congregation just follows along like sheep, unaware of where they’re being led. Even when one has the slightest intuition that something said does not sit well with his conscious, he resists the urge to speak out for fear of being called rebellious, or worse – *unsaved*. To think for oneself is certainly not encouraged in a system of conformity. As a result, well-meaning men, through their silence, become complicit in the oppression of women within the church. This is often the consequence when religious leaders portray themselves as the mouthpiece of God, and then interpret selective scriptures to instill fear, compliance, and guilt in the minds of congregants. And just as Eurocentric images and language were used to advance the cause of white supremacy, biblical images and language are used to perpetuate the patriarchal system in and beyond the walls of the church.

When interviewing Lori Robinson, rape survivor and author of *I Will Survive: The African-American Guide to Healing from Sexual Assault and Abuse*, I asked her to what extent she thought patriarchy contributed to an environment where sexual, physical, and psychological violence takes place. She responded in the following manner. (See Appendix D for full interview.)

I would say contributes is not even the word, it's the foundation of the environment that produces and perpetuates violence against women or gender-based violence of all types. So patriarchy, or a male-dominated society, by definition it is a society in which women are less valued than men and which men give themselves...and it's accepted society-wide, that men are entitled to power and control over women, then it's kind of just rich breeding ground for the types of behavior...these types of behaviors.

Religious Roots of Patriarchy

Former bishop of the Episcopal Church, scholar, and spokesperson John Shelby

Spong invites us to uncover the roots of patriarchy.

If an attitude finds expression in every prevailing religious system in the world, and in almost every society, one begins to suspect that this attitude has its roots in something very basic in our humanity. Religion incorporates and explains human content far more than it creates human content. Therefore, religion becomes the place where we begin to search for answers to the sin of patriarchy, and when we do so the sins of scripture in the form of the terrible texts about women in the Bible come into view.³⁸

Simply put, patriarchy is a violent system. When male privilege is used to treat a woman like a servant, define women's roles, or prevent women from making major decisions – a violent act has taken place. If this is so, then we must conclude that the bible, through certain texts, encourages violence by teaching that a woman is from man and not from God, therefore not capable of being an independent being with independent thought. After all, *1Corinthians 11: 7-9* states specifically that...*for man is made in God's image and reflects God's glory. And woman reflects man's glory. For the first man didn't come from woman, but the first woman came from man. And man was not made for woman, but woman was made for man.*

³⁸ John Shelby Spong, *The Sins of Scripture: Exposing the Bible's Texts of Hate to Reveal the God of Love* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), 74.

Not only is the text violent, but the interpretation and application of the text is even more violent, particularly when that interpretation is done void of the cultural context in which it was written. Unfortunately, this is a practice that happens far too often – in the name of staying true to biblical scripture. Consider the following excerpts from a sermon given by Pastor Steven L. Anderson, of Faithful Word Baptist Church, on why women should not say “Amen” in church. In essence, Pastor Anderson believes, in staying true to the following scriptures, that women must remain silent in church.

Women should learn quietly and submissively. I do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly. For God made Adam first, and afterward he made Eve (1 Timothy 2: 11-13 NLT).

Women should be silent during the church meetings. It is not proper for them to speak. They should be submissive, just as the law says. If they have any questions, they should ask their husbands at home, for it is improper for women to speak in church meetings (1 Corinthians 14: 34-35 NLT).

For literal bible believing Christians, such as Pastor Anderson, the admonishment is clear – women have their place in the church, and at home. The adherence to the aforementioned scriptures clearly indicates that there is no escape for women. They are under a patriarchal covering at the church...subject to the teachings of the male pastor, and they're under a patriarchal covering at home...subject to the teachings of their husbands. Many of the men, including pastors, who succumb to or perpetuate this teaching, would swear that they are not the intentional oppressors of women. Most would say that they are simply following the *Scriptures* and that they have no choice but to obey God. This is a scary thought, as it indicates the depth of patriarchy's effects in the religious mind. Truthfully, what men would call their obedience to the scriptures is nothing more than their attempt to maintain power and control over women. It's not hard to do when men convince the masses that God is made in their image. And with that,

long-standing, bible-based gender roles have withstood the test of time – no more apparent than the role of *wife*.

The Nancy Murphy Story

In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands. Then, even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will be won over by observing your pure and reverent lives (1Peter 3:1-2 NLT).

In *The Resignation of Eve*, Jim Henderson tells us the story of Nancy Murphy, who is now the executive director of Northwest Family Life, an agency dedicated to helping the victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. Nancy grew up as the daughter of missionaries, so presenting the message of Jesus to the marginalized was nothing new for her. She grew up, versed in the Christian way, and headed off for college. There, she involved herself in Christian activities, where she would meet the man who would eventually become her husband. He was passionate about Jesus, and read his Bible with enthusiasm. She was so excited about starting a life with this saved, strong man of God whom God had brought into her life. On the third day of the honeymoon, she woke up, after having a bad dream, and told her husband that she wanted to go outside and pray to release the feeling of the dream. It was at this point that her husband told her to stay in bed. While she was taken aback by his forceful tone, she went outside to pray anyway. As she was praying, her husband came up from behind and began hitting her and swearing at her. Needless to say, she was quite shocked. That was the first time that she had heard him speak like that or act like that. Her shock was intensified when he told her, ‘Your life is never going to be the same again.’ It was from this moment on that everything changed. As the violence escalated, Nancy searched for a way to cope while

attempting to keep her marriage intact. In his book, Jim Henderson recounts Nancy's experience and her thoughts as she weathered the violent storms.

Nancy, of course, had been trained in the evangelical way and understood what Scripture said about divorce. "The parts of the Scriptures I knew about wives and marriage read like this: 'Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct' (1 Peter 3:1-2, NKJV)." She pointed out to me that this passage was preceded by reminders from the apostle Peter about Jesus' willingness to suffer unto death.

"I mentally recounted my wedding vows," Nancy continued. "What had I committed to? 'I take you to be my lawful wedded husband, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health 'til death parts us.'"

"Well, I wasn't dead, so it sounded as if it was my job to adjust my behavior to 'win' my husband. This type of behavior was all new to me. I was totally unaware that violence could exist in a marriage where both were Christians.

I didn't have more than two or three minutes before the violence escalated, and I had to make a quick choice. I had just married a man I loved. It was just the two of us...alone, finally. We'd already made love. I felt as if I had no other choice. I turned to him and said, 'I'm sorry.' I told him I wouldn't 'disobey' him again, and I begged him to calm down. He did. He explained that I had done something that had caused him to hit me. I'd left the room when he'd told me not to. I promised never to do it again, and I felt a big piece of my heart shrivel to the size of a dried pea. It had been so large just the day before. That was over now."³⁹

Nancy spent the next 10 years trying to win her husband over – so he could stop hitting her. On a few occasions, she even turned to others for help. One night, while staying at the home of their pastor and wife, Nancy's husband left the house and didn't return until the early morning hours. He told Nancy that he had picked up a hitchhiker and had sex with the woman because Nancy didn't have time to talk to *him* anymore. When she told her pastor's wife about the abuse, the first lady suggested that perhaps it

³⁹ Jim Henderson, *The Resignation of Eve: What If Adam's Rib Is No Longer Willing to Be the Church's Backbone?* (Carol Stream, IL: BarnaBooks, 2012), 50-51.

was happening because the two of them weren't attending church faithfully. In the meantime, while talking to the pastor's wife, the pastor and Nancy's husband went out to talk. Upon return, the pastor acknowledged to Nancy that he knew her husband had treated her badly. However, he said, after spending the whole day with him, he concluded that he was a special guy and offered him the assistant pastor position after the two of them worked their problems out.

"You have to learn to get up from the table when love is no longer being served."

—Nina Simone

Nancy finally found the courage to leave after she witnessed her husband kick their youngest child. That was the wake-up call she needed. With the help of a friend, Nancy moved out and began a new journey. But not before an attempted reconciliation with her husband – advice that she got from another pastor. After her husband hit her again, she was intent on leaving for good. Through a network of friends, and Christians who were followers of Jesus, she found her way to Seattle, where her new life would finally begin.

Nancy's story is a prime example of how detrimental Christian patriarchy can be. At the expense of her own life, Nancy was completely convinced that her suffering was mandated by God in the name of being a good Christian wife. It took years of abuse and the possible sacrifice of a child for her to realize that only a God created and made in the image of patriarchal men would require such a sacrifice. Likewise, patriarchy, on its way to oppressing women, oppresses the minds of men, as well. As noted from the earlier dialogue with the men of Spirit and Truth, the patriarchal mindset of the church often relieves men of their own senses. As a result, many men blindly follow the instruction of

their pastors and, without original intention, oppress their wives, mates, and other women in the church...in the name of God. This, of course, is another privilege of patriarchy – the privilege to be unaware of the overt and collateral damage that maleness provides. Jim Henderson's *The Resignation of Eve*, also invites us to see how patriarchy can encourage women to be complicit in their own oppression – though these women would prefer the term *obedience* than *oppression*. Henderson also tells of a woman, who, in obedience to their Christian faith, believes wholeheartedly that women are unequipped to lead. Staying true to scripture, she believes that a woman's submission and her adherence to specific gender roles, is the recipe for a happy marriage. Simply put, her philosophy is that men would feel more affirmed and take more authority if a woman learned how to be quiet and submit to his leadership. While many traditional Christian women see this as a proven technique to keep the peace within a marriage, the cost of such peace can be contradictory to the self-worth and authentic voice of women.

When I think about the power that patriarchal images of God wields, I am reminded of the difficult endeavor that women have in re-imaging the Divine. Rev. Shaheerah's attempt to image God as feminine mirrors the experience of many women who struggled to do the same. Jennie S. Knight in *Feminist Mysticism and Images of GOD* offers a glimpse of why this is so:

My research with women in the Christian feminist spirituality movement revealed a complex of tensions they experienced when they challenged the "official" male God of their childhoods, trying to image the divine as feminine. For example, they realized that they did not consider women worthy to be representative of the divine because they did not experience women as powerful. Even though they had all been trying to change their image of the divine to a feminine image for a number of years, they still struggled to do so because they did not feel themselves, their mothers, or other women to be powerful or worthy enough to represent the divine. Their image of God had been largely created out of personality aspects of

their fathers or of other men because they had difficulty seeing their mothers or other women as representative of the divine.⁴⁰

This is the power of Christian patriarchy with its associated images. The tendency to diminish *self* constitutes self-inflicted violence. The inability of women to see themselves as equal and intentional beings in God's creation reduces their agency in the world. A deep re-imaging of the divine must be undertaken if patriarchy is to be dismantled in the mind. God must be envisioned through a different lens if justice is to ever be a reality for women around the world. Until that day, ego-driven men will continue to make manifest the words of Nawal El Saadawi: "*Patriarchy Needs God To Justify Injustice.*"⁴¹

⁴⁰ Jennie S. Knight, *Feminist Mysticism and Images of God: A Practical Theology* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2011), 25.

⁴¹ Karen Tate, *Voices of the Sacred Feminine* (Alresford, UK: John Hunt Publishing, 2014), 1.

CHAPTER 3 MASCULINE MYSTIQUE

*It is true that masses of men have not begun to look
at the ways that patriarchy keeps them from knowing
themselves, from being in touch with their feelings, from
loving. To know love, men must be able to choose life over death.
They must be willing to change.*⁴²

-bell hooks

Any discussion of violence towards women must, at its core, address the culture and the climate that engenders such violence. Incidences of violence towards women do not exist in a vacuum. They occur within the context of a society where violence is the norm. As it pertains to violence, Sociologist Orlando Patterson gives this critique of the violent history of our nation.

America has always been a violent place. And quite apart from their involvement with slavery. Euro-Americans have always exhibited a perverse fascination with violence. The violence of Euro-American men against other Euro-American men, and against Euro-American women, needs no documentation. The law of the jungle, of an eye for an eye, has played and continues to play, a central role in the culture. . . .Euro-American men exhibit a higher rate of homicide and other forms of violence than do the men of any other advanced industrial society. . . .America is the only advanced industrial society that practices capital punishment. . . .The experience, and fear, of violence among Euro-Americans is hardly new. . . .The quintessential American myth is that of the cowboy. . . .Central to that myth are the role of violence and the

⁴² bell hooks, *The Will To Change: Men, Masculinity, And Love* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2004), xvii

reverence for the gun. . . . Thus violence is not only shunned and dreaded in American culture; it is also embraced and romanticized.⁴³

Psychologist Michele Toomey adds, “The pressures to speak and act violently are everywhere... Violence is not a deviant act; it is a conforming one.”⁴⁴ And it has long been the case that boys and men are conforming at alarming rates. When looking at the gender disparities that exist when analyzing the perpetrators of violent acts, it leads one to believe that it is something about the ways boys and men are socialized, that make them more prone to violence. Further analysis points to prevailing ideas of masculinity and the ways in which males are indoctrinated into that system.

While there is a growing concern about the need to address violence in our streets and homes, there has not been a widespread or sweeping analysis of that which reinforces violent, reckless, self-destructive behavior in men and boys, and what can be done to change it. And despite the continued proliferation of systems that thrive on male-dominance and hyper-masculinity, I am amazed at the failure of society to draw a definitive correlation between the way in which boys are raised and the violence perpetrated by the males. Perhaps it is the privilege afforded to those in power that allows them to ignore their own responsibility in the creation of violent societies. Myriam Miedzian, author of *Boys will be Boys*, blames the “masculine mystique” for creating a culture of violence among men, while also creating an environment in which men are afraid to oppose this system, publicly or privately. As a result, many of the men who have

⁴³ Orlando Patterson, *Rituals of Blood: Consequences of Slavery in Two American Centuries* (Washington, DC: Civitas/CounterPoint, 1998), 242-243.

⁴⁴ Michele Toomey, “The Price of Masculinity Based on Violence,” *Education Digest*, 58, no. 4 (1992): 44-46.

never even committed a significant act of violence become silently complicit in the maintenance of a culture dominated by oppressive and violent men.

Men are not born violent; rather they are born and socialized into a system that serves as an incubator for violence. According to Michael Kimmel, “The belief that violence is manly is not carried on any chromosome, not soldered into the wiring of the right or left hemisphere, not juiced by testosterone. Boys learn it.”⁴⁵ As one who continually strives to grow spiritually, mentally, and psychologically, I maintain that what is *learned* can be *unlearned*. I wholeheartedly share in the belief that Jackson Katz states in *The Macho Paradox*:

Since domestic and sexual violence are largely learned behaviors, it is important to reach boys before they learn to abuse girls. And since these types of violence are so closely linked to men’s beliefs about what it means to be a man, it is also important to provide boys with alternative ideas about manhood to counterbalance all of the hypermasculine posturing and misogyny they encounter in their peer culture and the media.⁴⁶

As a boy, I can recall many of the messages that I received about being a “big boy.” These ideas were undoubtedly the ideas I was to embrace as I became a man. I can remember statements such as, “Stop crying...big boys don’t cry!” “Suck it up!” “Stop whining!” In my young mind, many of these messages translated into, “Don’t show emotion and never let anyone know how you really feel.” As a result, I learned at an early age to betray myself by denying the inner urges and yearnings of my spirit...particularly if those urges were inconsistent with the ideas of manhood that were being thrust upon me. To do so would have been detrimental to my male identity, resulting in an immediate

⁴⁵ Michael Kimmel, “Searching for a New Boyhood: The Testosterone vs. Feminism Debate,” *Voice Male: The Magazine of the Men’s Resource Center of Western Massachusetts* (Winter 2000): 8-10.

⁴⁶ Jackson Katz, *The Macho Paradox: Why Some Men Hurt Women and How All Men Can Help* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2006), 228.

dismissal from the boy's club. From that point on, I learned how to put limits on the expression of my feelings, thereby limiting my future ability to love. Little did I know that I was sacrificing my ability to feel so that I could take my place in a world where I would be considered a real *man's man*. Hindsight now reveals to me that by shutting down my ability to feel, I was also shutting down my capacity for intimacy.

Consequently, the first relationship that was characterized by a total lack of intimacy was the relationship with myself. This is the case for many men. The suppression of feelings and thoughts is directed inward, as men feel that they are not allowed to give outward expression to anything of a feeling nature...except rage of course. And this rage is often a by-product of the anger that results from trying so desperately to live according to the patriarchal script; a script that is so embedded, that many men are not aware of its impact until demands for intimacy are put upon them. The impact of this socialization cannot be understated. Bell hooks states, "Patriarchy is the single most life-threatening social disease assaulting the male body and spirit in our nation."⁴⁷ This assault finds its beginnings in the lives of our boys, with an even more devastating impact upon black boys. She goes further to say, "Oftentimes the patriarchal socialization that insists boys should not express emotions or have emotional caretaking is most viciously and ruthlessly implicated in the early childhood socialization of black boys. The image of emasculated and castrated black males is so embedded in the cultural imagination that many black parents feel it is crucial to train boys to be "tough."⁴⁸ This point is well-illustrated as Houston A. Baker, Jr., in his autobiographical essay, "On the Distinction of

⁴⁷ hooks, *The Will To Change*, 17.

⁴⁸ bell hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 86.

‘Jr.,’” describes the psychological terrorism that takes place as black boys are socialized into patriarchal thinking:

I am eleven years old, giddy with the joy of fire and awed by the seemingly invulnerability of my father. He is removing dead coals from the glowing bed of the furnace. He is risking the peril of flames. We are sharing...we are together....For some reason I am prompted to move with the pure spirit of being. I begin dancing around the furnace with light abandon. My voice slides up the scale to a high falsetto. I am possessed by some primitive god of fire. I feel joyful and secure. I am supremely happy, high-voiced, fluid. Then I am suddenly flattened against a limestone wall, bolts of lightning and bright stars flashing in my head. I have been hard and viciously slapped in the mouth as a thunderous voice shouts. . . . “Stop acting like a sissy.”⁴⁹

The above story is a common occurrence in many households in which boys grow up. It is yet another message that signals to boys that the free expression of feelings and creativity is not an acceptable representation of manhood. Unfortunately, many boys, in the attempt to garner acceptance and male closeness, accept this message and continue to acquiesce to these notions of manhood throughout their lifetime. All the while, these men are unaware of the dangers that are to come due to the repression of their true feelings. Meanwhile, boys who reject these hardened notions of manhood and dare to step outside of the box are often ridiculed and subjected to brutality for not living up to patriarchal standards. Many of our boys are subjected to this trauma for fear that they may become “too soft.” When bell hooks uses the term, *Soul Murder*, when describing this process. Soul Murder is the psychological term that best describes this crushing of the male spirit in boyhood.⁵⁰ Diminished self-esteem, low self-worth, and chronic depression are often the results of this soul murdering process. According to educator John Bradshaw, this

⁴⁹ Ibid., 86-87.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 87.

depression is a consequence of their “true and authentic selves being shamed through abandonment in childhood.”⁵¹ Many boys, including myself, were shamed into accepting rigid notions of patriarchal boyhood. My own story comes to mind as I recall my tendency, as a little boy, to cry when my feelings were hurt by my father. I clearly remember being reprimanded and shamed for expressing my feelings in that manner. After all, big boys didn’t cry. As a result, I eventually learned how to deny my feelings. Years of conditioning eventually translated into the abandonment of my true self. The inner conflict that ensued lasted well into my adult years and continues to be a focal point of my healing.

The conflict and inner tension that men experience can be directly attributed to the mixed messages they receive about manhood. On one hand, males are socialized to believe that their maleness reserves for them the right to be dominant, controlling, and preferred – descriptors which many men use to bolster their sense of self. On the other hand, males are shamed, humiliated, and ostracized when they display behavior that is not consistent with the rigid requirements of patriarchal manhood. The phenomenon, which most often has its genesis within the home of most boys, is heavily reinforced in the peer group and eventually finds its way into all spaces where men gather...most notably, the sports and military culture, fraternities, and gang culture as well. The pressure to maintain allegiance to patriarchal expectations can be psychologically devastating to the man who feels the unction to step outside the confines of those expectations. These stories are played out in the private lives of men and the public places in which they gather, whether the lockerooms, boardrooms, or the battlefield –

⁵¹ John Bradshaw, *Healing the Shame That Binds You*, (Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 2005), 65.

men cannot escape the pressures of patriarchy. Popular media, music, and movies also reinforce the power of patriarchal indoctrination.

In the popular 1999 movie, *Analyze That*, Robert DeNiro is cast as mob boss, Paul Vitti. At some point in the movie, Vitti suffers a panic attack and tells his bodyguard that he needs to see a psychiatrist, but it has to be kept a secret. When Vitti finally meets Dr. Ben Sobel, played by Billy Crystal, he claims that *his friend* needs therapy. Dr. Sobel, recognizing that Vitti is talking about himself, suggests that his panic attacks, as well as anger issues, are most likely related to stress – a suggestion that Vitti vehemently denies. As the story progresses, Dr. Sobel uncovers that Paul Vitti's issues are due to unresolved feelings about his relationship with his father and the unresolved grief associated with the blame he assumes for his father's murder, which he witnessed as a child. While the intention of the movie is to give a comedic edge to an otherwise cold-blooded mobster, it succeeds in sending the resounding message that men are not to express feelings – and to do so is to show weakness. Paul Vitti's insistence that his relationship with the psychiatrist be kept secret, directly translates into his fear of being seen as someone who has feelings – an admittance that could be life threatening in the world in which he lives and operates. Similarly, many men in the real world experience significant amounts of trepidation when faced with the possibility of showing weakness or disloyalty to patriarchal norms; to do so is synonymous to the death of their manhood.

The dilemma that men face on a daily basis can develop into internalized rage or violence when healthy outlets for expressing feelings are not present. Donald Dutton, author of *The Batterer*, believes that the way out of this dilemma rests in providing men with the proper channels to acknowledge and feel pain. When speaking of black men, in

particular, he states, “They must, like all wounded males, ‘mourn the loss of what was never attained and attempt to integrate the good and bad aspects of what is still possible.” In the absence of proper channels, ‘trapped feelings of powerlessness’ can engender rage. Violence towards self and others is often the alternative for the misplaced emotions that men internalize. The hatred, shame, and confusion that confounds these men, is most often directed inwardly before outer manifestations appear. A man who has directed his anger at others, has first directed it at himself. The outward display of his rage is but a symptom of his inability to express himself, as well as a consequence of the debilitating methods he uses to suppress his emotions.

Such was the case with many of the participants from the TLC, the group of men that I met with from Transforming Love Community. Calvin, one of the more vocal participants, acknowledged that it was his insistence on maintaining the “masculine mystique” that gave him need to express his dominance at home. This overwhelming need was born out of the fact that he really felt *powerless*. The conflict within led him to alcohol and drugs as a way to ease the pain and tension that he felt. Without realizing the source of the tension, he continued to numb himself with intoxicants, which in turn, increased his anger and frustration. In the midst of the workshop, he began to have glimpses of truth, realizing that he, and not just his wife at the time, had a significant responsibility in the demise of the relationship, as well as his current estrangement from his wife. Up until that point, he had been blaming his wife for his troubles. In *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*, bell hooks references this tendency. “Scapegoating is

a diversionary tactic. It allows the scapegoater to avoid the issues they must confront if they are to assume responsibility for their lives.”⁵²

Tom, another eager participant, expressed his frustration with being seen merely as a provider during his marriage. He recalled how when he attempted to express himself, he was seen as being weak. He, too, turned to drugs and alcohol to deal with his feelings of hurt and anger. I challenged Tom to consider whether he was upset with his former wife because she saw him merely as a provider, or if he was mad at himself for presenting himself as a provider at the outset of the relationship. My question was aimed at getting Tom to see that the ideas of masculinity into which he was indoctrinated, only defined him as a responsible man if he kept a job, protected and provided for the material well-being of his family. When Tom temporarily lost the income he had been accustomed to, he subsequently felt less than a man. Unfortunately, when he attempted to express how he felt to his wife, he was met with the same resistance from his wife. She, being indoctrinated by the same beliefs, saw Tom as less than *real man*. It is not unreasonable to assume that outward displays of violence would follow, as both of these men began to direct their frustrations inward. As it is often said, *hurt people hurt others*. Michael Kimmel reminds us that the real enemy is not the person to whom this outward anger is directed. He states that,

Our enemy is an ideology of masculinity that we inherited from our fathers, and their fathers before them, an ideology that promises unparalleled acquisition coupled with tragically impoverished emotional intelligence. We have accepted an ideology of masculinity that leaves us feeling empty and alone when we do it right, and even worse when we feel we’re doing it wrong. Worst of all, though, is when we feel we’ve done it

⁵² hooks, *We Real Cool*, 85.

right and still do not get the rewards to which we believe we are entitled. Then we have to blame somebody. Somebody else.⁵³

The more I continued to interact with these men, as well as analyze my own ideas of masculinity, I realized that most men, as a result of these trumped up ideas of masculinity, suffer from intense shame. This toxic shame is rooted in the false persona that men must display in order to not be seen as weak. Further shame is also brought on by the guilt associated with the outward displays of rage and violence that result from misplaced blame. John Bradshaw, author of *Healing The Shame That Binds You*, says, “Toxic shame is unbearable and always necessitates a cover-up, a false self. Since one feels his true self is defective and flawed, one needs a false self that is not defective and flawed.”⁵⁴ He goes on to suggest that, “Toxic shame is the greatest form of learned domestic violence there is. It destroys human life.”⁵⁵ I’m reminded of when I was in my mid-twenties, suffering from the same type of identity complex. The prevailing ideas of masculinity encouraged me to *look the part* of a man before I really knew what a man was. It wasn’t long before I was walking down the aisle, pretending to be someone that I had never intimately known. I was making the commitment to be a husband not because I wanted to, but because I wanted to *look* like a man who could commit. In other words, I was more concerned about how I looked to a woman than how I looked to myself. I was making what was supposed to be a life-long commitment and had no idea that I was supposed to *feel* some sort of way about that. My dad, society, religion, as well as institutional life had impressed upon me that life was about meeting obligations. If these

⁵³ Michael S. Kimmel, *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era* (New York: Nation Books, 2013), 1.

⁵⁴ Bradshaw, *Healing the Shame*, xvii.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

obligations defined what a man was, I was willing to oblige. My indoctrination had taught me that I didn't have a choice. Little did I know at the time that I was committing what Alice Miller calls, *soul murder*. The betrayal of my *authentic self* would soon lead to the betrayal of the marriage. The death of *self* led to the death of the marriage.

This is the story of countless numbers of men who suffer alienation from their authentic selves. The impact to themselves, their children, and women is of biblical proportions. To the modern day Christian, the toxic shame produced also has biblical roots. The Bible story concerning the *fall of man* is one in which we become intimately familiar with Adam's shame due to his disobedience in the garden. According to the story, Adam was at first *naked and not ashamed*. In the attempt to become something that he wasn't created to be, Adam betrayed God by eating the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. When God returned, he found that Adam was hiding himself. When God asked Adam why he was hiding, Adam responded by saying, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." God's response, "Who told you that you were naked?" shows us how alternative messages we receive from others can often contradict who we really are. When Adam and Eve chose to become something other than what they were, they became naked and ashamed.

While the story is symbolic of mankind's condition, it is poignantly the case for the masses of men. Men, as the recipients of messages that encourage them to display hyper-masculine behavior, face an intense amount of shaming when they display any behavior that is inconsistent with the masculine facade. Consequently, when men suppress behaviors that have been labeled feminine, such as compassion, love, and the outward expression of emotions, they are, in essence, betraying themselves. Scripture,

when interpreted inclusively, provides us a basis for understanding the nature of mankind as including both the masculine and feminine aspects of creation. Genesis 1:26-27 reads,

Then God said, "Let us make man in **our** image, in our likeness, and let **them** rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground...So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created him; **male and female he created them.**"

With the understanding that the words *man* and *him* denote *mankind* in the above scripture, attention must also be given to the use of the words *our* and *them*. Their usage begs the question, "Who is *our* and *them* referring to?" The end of the scripture confirms that God created *him...male and female*. This leads one to believe that there is a dual nature to God's creation. If God created *them male and female*, then this would surely suggest that there is equal billing to the male and female aspect of God. This further suggests that there is a feminine nature encompassed in the divine, the presence of which contradicts the notion that God is solely male or masculine in nature. The implication of this notion should be translated into our lived experiences. If we assume that, according to the above scripture, that the male and female aspect of creation is an original idea in the mind of God, then we also must assume that females do not occupy a secondary status in God's kingdom. Further, the scripture might also suggest that there is a male and female aspect to mankind...that mankind is incomplete without a symbiosis of the two. Therefore, to deny, suppress, or oppress an aspect of this creation is to deny what makes us fully human. However, if one maintains that Genesis 2:21-23 is the only authentic account of woman's creation, a different conclusion will be drawn. Genesis 2:22 reads,

So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone

of my bones and flesh off my flesh; she shall be called woman; for she was taken out of man.”

One can see how interpretation of the latter scripture can lead to the belief that females were a secondary notion in God’s creation rather than an original idea. These scriptures, by themselves, can set the foundation for embedded beliefs about God’s intention as it relates to gender, as well as the male/female identity and the associated gender roles. A more in-depth exploration of the religious and biblical contributions to gender identity will be discussed in another chapter. However, it remains important to note how ideas of masculinity are gleaned from scripture.

The traditional ways in which boys and men are indoctrinated into masculinity demands that they suppress any thoughts and behaviors that can be interpreted as feminine. The upcoming documentary, “The Mask You Live In” by Jennifer Soebel, explores the indoctrination that boys receive from an early age by being told to “Man Up!” “Man up” means to essentially suck up your feelings and refrain from displaying anything that is contrary to being hard, aggressive, and unemotional. The trailer to the documentary suggests that boys are falling into depression at alarming rates due to the pressure “to be a man.” In essence, boys are being asked to hype-up the masculine behaviors while simultaneously suppressing the behaviors that we call feminine. Without the knowledge that they were created with the capacity to feel and express a wide range of emotions; and without the recognition that they have the inherent permission to display such emotions, boys and men suppress that which makes them a healthy and whole human being.

At some point during the second workshop with the Men of TLC in Detroit, MI, I asked the men to list all of the behaviors that they associated with being a man. I then

asked them to list the behaviors they deemed as being feminine. True to form, when listing masculine and feminine behaviors, men created a list that mirrored the indoctrination they received at a young age. The compiled list was as follows:

Masculine	Feminine
Strong	Crying
Leader	Maternal
Athleticism	Weak
Role model	Emotional
Dominance	Sensitive
Suppress feelings	Timid
Emotionless	Nurture
Tough	Teacher
Womanizer	Soft
Don't be a pussy	Friendly
Bravery	
Controlling	
Head of household	
Provider	

Table 1 Masculine and Feminine Behaviors

After the list was compiled, men saw a visual representation of the standards in which they had been desperately trying to live up to. One participant, Darryl, acknowledged that the masculine characteristics were given to him at an early age. He admitted that these descriptors encouraged him to live in a box – a masculine box, a box that he allowed to define him for the majority of his life. The significance of this was not lost in Darryl, nor was it lost on many of the other men. Darryl's story included time that he had done in the penitentiary. In recalling his story, I remember Darryl telling me about how his arrest had come to pass. As a young man in his early twenties, he was hanging out with a bunch of guys his age, when someone decided that stealing a car would be a “fun” thing to do. Darryl, not wanting to spoil the fun, and certainly not wanting to be a punk, went along with the program. When the guys finally got pulled over by the police,

they were all arrested. Darryl chose to forego his opportunity to lessen his jail time, in favor of not being seen as snitch. In the end, Darryl spent 13 years in the penitentiary because he chose to live up to a code that his indoctrination convinced him was manly. During the workshop, he anxiously shared his experience with these codes of masculinity, as he had long recognized that they were the culprit for the early decisions he had made in his life. Darryl's story is the story of a countless number of men who have fallen prey to the *masculine mystique*.

While it took jail time for a stolen car for Darryl to begin the process of awakening to the dangers of male indoctrination, the consequences are more severe for many other men. The confusion and frustration that comes from trying to live up to a false identity, often engenders violence and abuse towards self and others. And all too often, this violence has deadly consequences. Spiritually speaking, when searching for the roots of masculinity, it remains to me that masculinity is born out of patriarchy, and they both are born out of a god complex that men glean from the Bible.

The Bible and Images of Masculinity

Ideas of masculinity cannot be divorced from the patriarchal images that men have been bombarded with since they first stepped foot in a church. You and I might be hard pressed to find a church, solely dedicated to Christian values, that didn't teach men that they should be dominant leaders in their home and beyond. In fact, the men who are not *having the last word* in their homes are often considered to be weak and henpecked. Consider the following scripture, which, while rarely preached openly in the church, encompasses the mindset of many men as they judge *manliness* in themselves or other men.

If a man's testicles are crushed or his penis is cut off, he may not be admitted to the assembly of the Lord. Deuteronomy 23:1

With that scripture in mind, it is not surprising that the phrases, “*get some balls*”

and *she's got you by the balls*,” refers to the times when men are not expressing dominance as men, or when women have usurped their authority. In the effort to *grow some balls*, it wouldn't be uncommon for a man to leave church or a men's study group, and go directly home to reassert their authority. During The 700 Club's “*Bring It On*” segment, Christian fundamentalist Pat Robertson sought to advise a man who sent in a question about how to approach marital problems with his wife. Robertson remarked that “*he can't let her get away with this stuff*,” also noting that although we don't “*condone wife-beating these days*,” perhaps the man could move to Saudi Arabia, where a man could beat his wife. While this may sound like an extreme evangelical response that many liberal Christians wouldn't buy into, I am reminded of the advice I got, years ago, from friends when I was experiencing some issues with my, then, current wife. One friend was a Christian who was extremely active in his Baptist church, and the other did not regularly attend church, but had a Christian background. When I revealed to them some things that my wife had said to me, both of them responded by telling me that I should've slapped her. From their perspectives, a violent physical response on my part would've put things in their proper place. The response for Pat Robertson, as well as the advice from my friends, germinates from a place that endorses violence as a means of taking and keeping control. Hence, relationships that exist on a *dominant-subordinate* basis often use intimidation to preserve the form of the relationship. Intimate relationships founded on this principle are by their very nature – violent.

Biblical manhood cannot be separated from the messages that boys and men hear every day about *how to be a man*. Pastor, coach, and former NFL player, Joe Ehrmann shared the following words in a TEDx presentation designed to transform the culture of men and violence.

*"The three most destructive words that every man receives when he's a boy is when he's told to be a man."*⁵⁶

In giving a visual representation of the cycle that relates harmful ideas of manhood to violence, Pastor Joe identifies *socialization* and *social mandates* as starting points to developing the unhealthy habits that eventually lead to violence. It is my position that religion contributes significantly to the culture of socialization that boys and men receive. As he pinpoints *sexual conquests* as one of the myths of masculinity, I'm reminded of the conversations of my younger years when we men would attempt to justify sexual conquests by suggesting that if it was acceptable to God for biblical men to have multiple wives and concubines – then it should be acceptable for men today. Further, the Bible reveals that those sexual conquests are often accompanied by violence and perpetuated through rape. This further cements the notion of women as the property of men, solely at the will of men's pleasures – an idea which lives well in the minds of men today.

As the *best man* in a close friend's wedding in the late 80s, I recall my friend discussing the changes that would take place in his sexual relationship with his wife, now that he was married. His claim was that his wife was going to *give it to him* anytime he wanted because she was now his wife. When that didn't work out quite as planned, he

⁵⁶ Joe Ehrmann, "Be A Man," Tedx Talks, February 20, 2013, https://youtu.be/jVIIxutC_Ws (accessed April 24, 2016).

found someone else to *give it to him* anytime he wanted – while he was still married I might add. While observing a court-mandated session for men accused of domestic violence, I witnessed the angst of a man who was put off by being required to attend. When given the chance to express his feelings, he blurted out, as if he had been holding it in for too long...”The Bible says she’s mine and I can do whatever I want!” Apparently, he had resorted to violence when his sexual demands weren’t met.

Simone de Beauvoir once said. . .

“In a society shaped by men, women are seen as relative beings existing only in relationship to men”

In order to reshape society, patriarchy and hyper masculinity must be challenged by feminism. At its core, a reimagining of the divine must include a healthy balance of the *masculine* and *feminine* – a concept that I’ll explore in a later chapter. Until this happens, patriarchal men will continue to shape *God* and the *world* in their image.

CHAPTER 4

METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

Throughout this participatory project, a qualitative research method was used to analyze the information received from participants in the project. A qualitative method was best suited to highlight the thoughts, behaviors, and actions of the men participating in the project. As the aim of the project was to raise consciousness in a way that transforms actions, it was of primary importance that men were able to give voice to the stories that shape their lives and affect their relationships. The qualitative method allowed me to identify the roots of their perceptions of God and women, and connect those roots to current thoughts and actions that support and perpetrate violence. At the same time, I, as the researcher, was able to see myself in these men – thereby inviting them into an authentic transformative experience.

The framework surrounding the methodology was grounded in Narrative Mediation. This framework offered the perfect opportunity for the participants to become increasingly aware of the social, cultural, and religious contexts that have conspired to shape their perceptions and their conflicts. As the researcher, my task was to get men to realize how their perceptions of God, gender, and manhood have contributed to the lived-out narratives of their lives. Narrative Mediation was best suited to reveal to these men that conflict is often the result of outside stimuli, not some innate deficiency on their part. As men were able to tell their stories, and hear the stories of others, they were more amenable to see these stories in the context of conflicting messages that they've received

all of their lives. Narrative Mediation also allowed me to assist the men to externalize their conflict in such a way that they could see the imposition, and the damage, that external messages have had on them. It was then that men could be about the business of deconstructing dominant narratives, make discursive shifts, and begin the process of re-storying for the purpose of creating new narratives in their lives. It was the goal of this project for men to see how the social, cultural, religious narratives contribute to violence by promoting unhealthy perceptions of women, and invite them to embrace narratives that are non-violent and inclusive in nature – narratives created *by* them rather than imposed *on* them.

Data was collected and analyzed in 3 distinct phases, primarily with surveys and workshops used as the two methods in which to retrieve data. **Phase 1**, consisting of a preliminary survey and 2 workshops, took place in Detroit, MI and with the Men of Transforming Love Community (TLC). **Phase 2**, which also consisted of 2 workshops, took place in Decatur, GA with the Men of Spirit & Truth (MOST). **Phase 3** contained my primary method of collecting data, an on-line survey administered to 40 men via Survey Monkey. In addition to these phases, interviews were conducted with selected people whose stories, knowledge, and experiences could contribute to and support the overall objectives of the project. While some quantitative data was supplied from the sources, the majority of the information gathered from these methods was qualitative in nature – necessitating the need for the data to be analyzed accordingly.

The information I received from all three sources is supported and validated from the extensive research conducted on the subject matter. Ultimately, the combination of the research, along with the results from the participatory project, supported the

objectives set forth by my original Research Questions, and also established a basis from which further exploration can take place.

PHASE 1 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Workshop #1 – Survey and Video

The first phase of the survey was administered on April 25, 2014 to 15 men of Transforming Love Community in Detroit, MI (See Appendix I). The men were either members or friends of the church and were therefore expected to have a general knowledge of transformational principles gained from the church. The men were also chosen because of the prior relationship I had with the group. As a former minister at Transforming Love Community, I had the opportunity, at one time or another, to speak with or conduct workshops with these men. As a new resident of Atlanta GA, I had yet to build relationships with men in the Georgia community when I chose to administer this initial survey. Therefore, I chose to work with men I knew in Detroit - men who knew and trusted me. As seen in Table 2, of the 15 men that participated, 40%(6) were between the ages of 55-64; 40%(6) were between the ages of 45-54; 13%(2) were between the ages of 35-44; and 7%(1) was between 65-74 years of age. Ethnically, 66%(10) were Black/African-American; 20%(3) were White; 7%(1) was Native American; and 7%(1) identified as Other. Educationally, 46%(7) identified High School as the highest level of education completed; 27%(4) identified Trade/Vocational School as their highest level of education; 20%(3) identified as having Some College; 7%(1) identified himself as having No School.

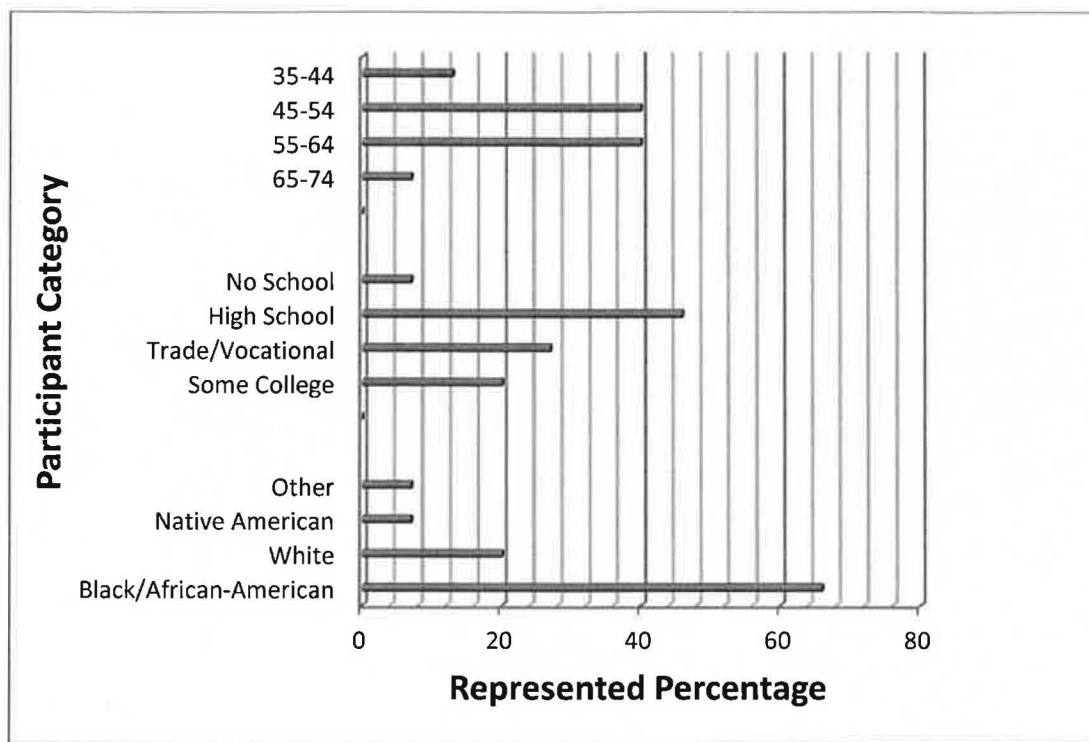


Table 2 Participant Category: Ages

The initial survey consisted of 12 questions that consisted of demographic questions as well as open-ended questions designed to elicit men's early perceptions of the gender of God as well as the sources of that perception, early characteristics that they attributed to God, the roles of women at home, at church, and in the workplace, and their thoughts about scriptures as it related to women. The scriptures I chose to include in the survey were thought to be common to the church experience. I designed the survey to be as straightforward as possible, with the assumption that the men's prior experience with God and the bible, would translate into an easy comprehension of the questions. Additionally, the survey required them to think and respond with written answers, and assumed that all of the respondents had the cognitive ability to do so in a clear and concise manner. Based on the fact that many of these men did not have access to technology, I decided to create and administer a survey that the men could complete

during our first face-to-face meeting. In surveying men's perceptions of women, gender roles, and the gender of God, men were asked to respond to the questions from the standpoint of their earliest teachings. While taking the survey, many of the men had to be reminded of this and often requested clarification of the other questions as well.

Before soliciting responses about the specific scriptures, the men were asked some preliminary questions pertaining to their earliest recollections of God. These questions related to the gender of God and the associated gender roles that they applied to that understanding. The questions were also designed as such to uncover the influences that contributed to those understandings. It was expected that these responses would provide a foundation from which the men would interpret the chosen scriptures. Again, while these men had varying degrees of religious awareness, it was expected that these men had a general knowledge of scriptures that spoke to the roles and status of women. All scriptures were taken from the NIV version of the Bible in an attempt to make the language more accessible. The following scriptures were chosen for analysis:

Genesis 2:21-23 NIV *So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman; for she was taken out of man."*

Genesis 3:12-16 NIV *The man said, "The woman you put here with me-she gave me some fruit for the tree, and I ate it." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."v16- To the*

woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

1Corinthians 11:7-9 NIV *A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.*

Ephesians 5:22-24 NIV *Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.*

Data Analysis Review

When questioned about the gender of God, 87 %(13) reported that their earliest recollection of God's gender was male. The remaining 13 %(2) reported God's gender as being "Other." All of the men noted, however, that their understanding of the gender God originated from religious teachings – by the way of a Pastor, church teachings, or by specific language read in the Bible.

Based on the limited answers to the questions pertaining to the characteristics of God and gender roles, I chose to change directions and move toward a dialogue about the survey. In the attempt to respond to the specific questions about the scriptures given, participants did respond to the familiar woman's creation story in Genesis 2: 21-23. All 15 of the men stated, in various ways, that the above scripture clearly indicates that woman comes from man. As such, women are to be subservient and submissive to men. Responses also indicated that since man was created first, the woman was a secondary creation that ultimately renders unto her, a secondary status. As a secondary entity, women are subjected to men's rule and are purposed to please men. 100% of the responses were consistent with the idea that women are the property of men.

The responses confirmed that the Genesis scripture often serves as the foundational scripture that men use to justify the subjugation of women. While, the Bible contains many secondary scriptures that support the notion that women were created solely for men, this scripture seems to be most familiar. These results are not surprising and only confirm the words of Merlin Stone, author of *When God Was a Woman*:

What else might we expect in a society that for centuries has taught young children, both male and female, that a MALE deity created the universe and all that is in it, produced MAN in his own divine image – and then, as an afterthought, created woman, to obediently help man in his endeavors? ⁵⁷

After completing the survey, men embraced the opportunity to discuss the nature of the survey questions and the common narratives that they had been indoctrinated by. Most of the conversation revolved around the roots of their perceptions. Some men revealed how church teachings contributed to their perceptions, while others spoke of how their fathers or society in general, had formulated their views on women and the associated roles that they play. Most men were enthusiastic to contribute to the dialogue, and by the nature of the conversation, it was apparent that the men rarely discussed this topic in open circles. The aftermath of the survey revealed that the lack of opportunity or desire to discuss intimate issues, as men, was another in a long list of narratives that they had adopted. In their world, men didn't freely discuss intimate feelings.

After the brief discussion, the men were invited to view the video, *Dreamworlds 3*, a documentary created and directed by Sut Jhally, a professor of communication at the University of Massachusetts Amherst whose work focuses on cultural studies,

⁵⁷ Merlin Stone, *When God Was a Woman*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), xi.

advertising, media, and consumption. He's also founder/executive director of the Media Education Foundation, a non-profit which produces and distributes documentary films and other educational resources to inspire critical reflection on the social, political, and cultural impact of American mass media. Specifically, *Dreamworlds 3* gives insight into the ways in which popular media, music, and music videos portray women. The initial intention was for the men to first bear witness to the various ways in which women are objectified and sexualized in entertainment industry. A further purpose for showing the video was to reveal how images shape the way we think about and perceive the opposite sex, and how these images are created with intentionality.

Analysis of Video Response

My purpose was met as the many of the men were deeply impacted by the video. Many men were very disturbed, as they viewed the video through the lens of being a father to a daughter. These men were concerned not only with how the women were exploited, but the message that these images send to their own daughters. Most of the men revealed that their maturity caused them to view the video quite differently than they had when they were younger. I also found that the men were further impacted by the fact that a context for the video was established before it was played. In other words, the men were not just viewing random images of women with no purpose save the entertainment value that many men receive from them. The men viewed the images partly through the critical lens of their existing narratives and began to see how external messaging had impacted them personally.

The video also forced the men to realize how impactful images can be. While some men talked about how young ladies buy in to the images they see, others commented on how young boys are choosing to emulate the rappers they see on these

videos. In the absence of an example or definition of manhood, many men believed that young boys are gathering their ideas of manhood by the examples of male/female interaction in the videos. Drew, one of the men in the group, believed that it was precisely this false indoctrination of manhood that caused men to be desensitized to the treatment of women. He strongly felt that this was a learned behavior. Conversely, he felt that this behavior could be unlearned as well. Horace, one of the senior members of the group, stressed the notion – the more things change, the more they stay the same. He stated that the current proliferation of technology and social media, has only served to make these images more accessible. He stated that in times past, magazines such as Playboy, Hustler, and Penthouse often produced the same images as the current videos. He further made the point that the exploitation of women has been present in our society for decades. His point was echoed by many of the other men who believed that female exploitation and the selling of sex are made more accessible by current television programming, movies, music, and technology.

A few of the men felt that women played a significant role in their own exploitation. One participant specifically stated that the fashion industry was partly responsible for the ways in which men view women. He believed that publications such as Victoria Secret and Sports Illustrated presented women in a seducing and provocative manner. In doing so, he stated, women attract the attention of men by presenting themselves as objects of desire. That very presentation could possibly illicit undesirable behaviors from men. According to him, women who intentionally present this image, but fail to take responsibility for men's reactions, are nothing more than conniving seductresses.

The discussion ended with an appeal by another participant that we begin to acknowledge and respect the humanity of women. He offered this as a starting point to renewed relationships with women.

Observations

The workshop proved to be a great starting point for men to start thinking about the relationship between their perceptions in the light of existing narratives. I was delighted to witness the enthusiasm that shown by most of the men. I believe that this enthusiasm was born out of the fact that men don't typically sit around and analyze the images of women that they are presented with. To view images of women with a critical eye, calls for men to suspend the enjoyment they get from these images. During the viewing of the video, I could see the men vacillating between viewing the video as a form of entertainment and viewing it critically. Again, my intention was to encourage the men to think about images and how they affect perceptions. Although the participants engaged in some spirited conversations after the video, I did question my decision to show the video. My observations made me think that I should've offered a more subtle example of how images can affect one's judgment and perception. Based on the make-up of the group, I got the feeling that the risqué images presented in the video, might've conjured up some thoughts about women that were not so healthy. However, by showing these risqué images, I was able to see clearly how men can struggle with the ways in which they view women. Overall, the workshop set the groundwork for a deeper exploration into the narratives that have caused conflict, as the men now showed more or a vulnerability and willingness to do so.

When analyzing the initial survey, I discovered that there were many men, who did not understand the questions or simply could not complete the survey independently.

Some of the answers I received were not adequate enough to draw any real conclusions from. I attributed this to the fact that the initial survey contained open-ended questions in which the men either skipped, or responded with answers that consisted of just a few words. I concluded that I would either have to recreate a survey that could be easily understood, or solicit a different group of men for the survey. While I chose not to use their survey responses as official data, I still took their responses into consideration and used the dialogue from the workshops as data for the project. Surveys or not, these men had begun to awaken and I didn't want to ignore that fact. Future workshops would consist of dialogues, supported by videos and visual presentations designed to elicit a deeper inquiry into the roots of their personal narratives.

Workshop #2 – Video and Dialogue

I returned to Detroit on June 20, 2014 to continue my work with the men. Based on the previous workshop, I concluded that it would be best to explore ideas of masculinity with the men. I realized that before the men could begin to acknowledge the prevalence of violence towards women, they would first have to acknowledge violence within themselves. And to acknowledge *that* violence, they would have to understand the *roots* of their own conflicting narratives.

Due to the fact that a significant amount of time had elapsed since the first workshop, I began Workshop #2 by reintroducing the aims of the project and how they fit in with the concept of Conflict Transformation. Prior to meeting with the men, I had decided that our session would mainly consist of having conversations around the concept of masculinity, as masculinity seemed to be topic that they were most interested in exploring. Based on the responses from the survey that they had completed, I chose not to use their responses as primary data. However, the dialogue generated from this session

would be significant as the project explored ideas of masculinity that many men are initially indoctrinated with.

As I opened the conversation, I encouraged the men to begin thinking about the messages about manhood that they learned early in their lives. I shared my own experiences of growing up in an environment where *true manhood* was characterized by being hard, emotionless, tough, and devoid of anything that was considered feminine. I asked men to look at the ways in which they had been socialized into manhood as we prepared to watch the trailer for *The Mask You Live In*, a documentary produced and directed by Jennifer Siebel Newsome that explores how America's narrow definition of masculinity is harming boys, men, and society at large (See Appendix H) I knew it would be difficult for men to see any possibility of their complicity in violence imposed upon women, if they didn't first see how masculine indoctrination was damaging to them. As planned, the video struck a nerve with the men.

Analysis of Video Response

Transformative conversations continued after the showing of the trailer as men really began to open up not only about the ways they were socialized, but the ways in which they were passing that socialization on to future generations. One participant reported that he was going to make an immediate change to the way in which he was raising his grandson. (See Appendix E)

Charles talked about his grandson who was being bullied in the 4th grade. Charles said that his first response to his grandson, in the effort to help him, was, "I ain't raising no punks!" After watching the trailer to the movie, Charles said something clicked for him as he realized how "screwed" up his response was to his grandson. He acknowledged that if his grandson buys into what he told him, it could open the door to some "real serious problems." By his own admission, Charles saw clearly how men can react when they believe that their manhood is being threatened.

For Charles and many other men, the discussion urged them to make connections between the messages they received as young men, and the experiences they had encountered in life thus far.

To further illustrate how men are indoctrinated into these prefabricated ideas of masculinity, I performed an exercise in which the men listed all of the words that came to mind to describe manhood. They would then list all of the words that were associated with women. I labeled these two lists Masculine and Feminine in order to further my point as we analyzed the lists. The idea was for men to get a side-by-side comparison of how these two lists differ from each other. Additionally, I wanted men to see and the possibility that the display of any of the behaviors that they considered feminine could cause an internal clash within them that would make them question their own manhood. The list of masculine and feminine traits that the men developed was as follows:

Masculine	Feminine
Clothing	Crying
Strong	Weak
Leader	Emotional
Athleticism	Sensitive
Role model	Maternal
Dominance	Timid
Non-expressive	Nurturer
Emotionless	Homemaker
Tough	Teacher
Don't be a pussy	Soft
Womanizer	Friendly
Controlling	
Brave	
Head of household	
Provider	
Disciplinarian	

Table 3 Masculine and Feminine Traits

Using *The Mask You Live In* trailer as a reference, I encouraged men to realize that the traits they listed on the board were similar to the traits that the video described as being damaging for young boys.

To emphasize the internal confusion that arises in boys and men when it comes to the displaying these traits, I shared my own story of growing up in a family, community, and neighborhood that taught me to accentuate the so-called masculine traits, while eliminating those traits that were considered feminine. All the men agreed that at varying times of their childhood, they were chastised whenever they displayed so-called *feminine* traits – the most glaring being when they expressed the desire to cry. At those times, they were told to ‘suck it up’ and hold in their tears because – ‘big boys don’t cry.’ I went further by asking the men, based on the list that *they* had created, what would they call the man who wasn’t athletic? What about the man that expressed his emotions freely? What do we call him? Would we call him *weak*, or a *pussy*? And what would we call the woman who displayed dominant characteristics, or showed strong leadership and athletic capabilities? Would she be considered a *bitch* or a *dyke*? The idea was to get the men to understand how these static classifications can be problematic and contribute to a violent culture.

The most profound response to this phenomenon was given by Drey, one of the participants in the session:

So what happens is when we have these characteristics given to us is we get put in a box – the men and masculine box and women in a feminine box. These boxes then define who we are. This is the other thing when we talk about respect. You gotta look at who is defining what respect is as we’re coming up and looking at these definitions on how to be a man. So we get these characteristics and I’m in a box. Now if I’m doing something and you tell me to quit crying, I’ve come out of my masculine box into the feminine box, where I’m told that’s not where I belong. So now I have

grabbed one of these characteristics on the masculine side to get back to this definition of what I think a man is. So now I have to be aggressive, I can't show no feelings, I might need to be violent or dominant over you or somebody else to redefine that I'm not feminine...because you told me I was crying, or you told me I was a pussy, or told me I was soft.

With Drey's statement as a backdrop, I suggested that, as a result of this phenomenon, men start to do this manly *posturing* – using these manly characteristics to *pose* as a man in front of other men and women as well. Boys learn at an early age that in order to get the attention of a girl or the respect of other boys, they must display these characteristics. Since aggression is most often linked to manhood, young boys believe that they must be aggressive, particularly in sports, to impress the girls and to be part of the boy's club. These boys grow up to men who now have wholeheartedly adopted aggression as an indication of manhood. Aggression, then, morphs into violence as boys begin to display their physical superiority through things like fighting, wrestling, boxing, football, etc. However, the mere display of these characteristics does not mean that this is truly who boys and men are. Just because a boy is told not to cry doesn't mean he relinquishes the feelings that encouraged him to cry in the first place. So in the effort to accentuate the masculine while downplaying the feminine, the question is – what happens to all of those feelings that have to be suppressed in order to pose as a man? I invited the men to see that the suppression of those feelings turns inward and ultimately becomes an extreme source of tension. Violence then, becomes an act that is first taken out on the selfhood of men. Referring back to what Drey said, I reiterated that violence directed inward, at some point or another, becomes violence directed outward. And more often than not, that violence is directed toward those who are closest to us, most often our intimate partners. I assumed by the verbal affirmations and the nods of heads, that I had struck a nerve with the men. I noticed the light go on for men who could now see a direct correlation between what we

were discussing and where they found themselves in this season of their lives. Many, if not all of the men on the workshop were actively engaged in a recovery program or had previous interactions with the penal system due to drugs or violence associated with drugs. Therefore, it wasn't hard for some of them to make the connection between these ideas of masculinity and violence.

To bring the conversation full circle and get the men to see how violence had become a part of their experience, I continued to use my own experience as an example. I recounted how I suppressed emotions or anything else that gave the appearance of being feminine, by becoming outwardly detached from emotions. To counteract this appearance, I engaged in drinking, experimenting with drugs, and relationships that were often lacking commitment and intimacy. I became indifferent to emotions as I worked very hard at being aloof. The culmination of all of these factors caused me to be more violent towards myself. The ingestion of drugs and alcohol is a violent by itself. The inner turmoil only increased as I was conflicted and torn by who I was pretending to *be*, as opposed the highest ideal of who I wanted to *become*. In doing so, I pushed away the very thing that I needed most. Being estranged from myself caused me to be estranged from others. I didn't know who I was, therefore I didn't know how or who to be for anyone else. Yet, I kept pretending and I continued to be involved in intimate relationships. I suffered from an identity crises that plagued me for the majority of my life.

I went on to suggest to the men that it's not until we get older that we come to express some of the traits that we traditionally held as feminine. I invited the men to entertain the notion that, in truth, we are made up of both masculine and feminine energy

– which was met some resistance as one of the participants blurted out, “You trying to say that we have feminine traits?” As I clarified what I meant by *masculine and feminine energy*, I could see that many of the men had already begun to embrace the concept. I urged the men to welcome the fact that if we indeed accept that we consist of both energies, then to suppress one or the other would be synonymous with denying our total selves. To the point that many of us begin to embrace these feminine characteristics later in life, two of the men shared stories that illustrated that it is not only age that increases this recognition, but certain experiences necessitate the need to recognize and express those things that were once seen as *unmanly*. Charles told the story of becoming a father to not one, but two girls. While looking at the Masculine/Feminine list that we had constructed earlier, he could pinpoint the time as a father when he began to display traits that he historically associated with being a woman. Todd, another vocal participant in the group, revealed his story of losing his son. The immense grief that accompanied the loss would not stay contained as he found himself experiencing bouts of crying that were previously unknown to him. The experience inspired him to write a book that served as a way to share his feelings and wisdom, while also giving him an outlet to heal.

By the workshop’s end, most of the men were able to recognize how these ingrained ideas of masculinity could lead to violence. Two of the participants, who had been quiet during the entire workshop, felt compelled to share their stories with the group. Their sharing, which according to them was inspired by the content of the workshop, showed me that just because someone seems to be unresponsive during a workshop, doesn’t mean that they aren’t present for what’s transpiring. While their

stories didn't have a direct connection to violence towards women, they were nonetheless very relevant to the evolving purpose of the workshop.

Final Observations

As I closed out my time with the men of TLC, I concluded that the workshop were a tremendous success. Although I didn't fully accomplish everything that I originally planned, the time with those men gave me some valuable insight into the process of how to get men to see and give voice to their narratives. It was through these workshops that I discovered that ideas of patriarchy cannot be divorced from masculinity. Likewise, the violence that patriarchy perpetrates on women cannot be acknowledged until men understand how unhealthy ideas of masculinity have cause them to violent to themselves, and then violent others, particularly women.

My dialogue with the men uncovered another interesting revelation, a revelation that, interestingly enough, was supported by the prior research I had done on images of God. While many of the men were able to realize how hyper masculinity was related to violence, a few of them reported that, although they had succumbed to violent behavior at times, their violence had rarely been directed at women. They attributed this to the fact that they were raised by strong women who taught them to have a high respect for all women. My prior research had uncovered that parents often reveal the nature of God to children. It occurred to me that in the absence of a father, a mother can become the *god* of a young son's life. In that event, perhaps men grow up learning to transfer their mother's reverence to all women. Further, the violence that they perpetrate on other men can be a phenomenon of, not only conflicted ideas of masculinity, but the anger that proceeds from the void left by an absentee father. Perhaps this acts as the genesis of men's discontent with a religion that requires them to worship a *Father God*. Along the same

lines, those men who were raised solely by a *strong* woman may not have witnessed the victimization of their mothers at the hands of misguided men. As result, they don't enact that violence on the women in their lives. The revelation stressed the impact that early images of God and women can have upon men.

I was highly encouraged by my time with the Men of Transforming Love Community. The time we spent was mutually beneficial. Their honesty, transparency, and enthusiasm set a foundation for the continuation of the project. Our time together confirmed that the concept of masculinity would be the avenue to which conflict and violence could be addressed. Only when men see how violence is turned inward, can they see how violence is manifested outward. Financial and time constraints did not allow me to continue my travel to Detroit from Atlanta to work with these men, but I felt very fortunate to have had the time to be vulnerable with these men and offer a safe space where they could do the same. If raising consciousness and expanding awareness was the goal, my mission was accomplished. I will forever be grateful to the Men of TLC.

PHASE 2 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

In the midst of conducting workshops in Detroit, I had the opportunity to find and embrace a spiritual community in Decatur, GA. Due to my inability to travel back and forth Detroit, I eventually asked the pastor, after establishing an initial presence in the church, if I could work with the men of Spirit and Truth Sanctuary as I proceeded with the dissertation project. He wholeheartedly embraced the work and agreed to my proposal. Spirit and Truth Sanctuary is a radically inclusive spiritual community located in Decatur, GA., where all of God's children are welcomed and celebrated - regardless of labels associated with gender, sexual orientation, religion, culture, or race.

Working with the Men of Spirit and Truth (M.O.S.T.) minimized my travel time and expenses and gave me the opportunity to establish some local groundwork that could be leveraged for future workshops and interactions. Most of the members of Spirit and Truth had been steeped in religious indoctrination at some point in their lives and were now embracing a new way of thinking in the attempt to gain a sense of liberation from religious rules and dogma. In this sense, the men were no different. My assumption was that the men at the church would be more amenable than the Men of TLC, due to their prior religious indoctrination, knowledge of the Bible and the confining nature of literally-interpreted scriptures. I also assumed that since the overarching message of Spirit and Truth was the doing away of labels that men would be able to easily connect with damage that gender labels produce and the violence ensues as a result.

Workshop #1

On October 25, 1914, I conducted my first workshop with the Men of Spirit and Truth (M.O.S.T.). The men who participated in the workshop were not pre-identified, but rather a random mix of men who chose to attend. The workshop was not as well-attended as I hoped, but I proceeded as if it was a packed house. I was told that previous attempts to have men gatherings had not been received well, for one reason or another. I concluded that perhaps the men's prior experience combined with the unfamiliarity of the content and presenter, kept them home.

Using the knowledge gained from my time with the Men of TLC in Detroit, MI, I intended to use the concept of masculinity as a starting point for men to open up masculine indoctrination and violence. Before we delved in to the content of the workshop, I spent a considerable amount of time explaining the purpose of the dissertation project and my reasons for engaging this subject. In doing so, I shared my

personal journey of discovery and conflict as it related to religion, relationships, and masculinity. I hoped that my transparency would build trust with the group and encourage them to do the same. Creating a safe space and building trust was paramount for me, especially with the knowledge that the previous men's gatherings were unsuccessful.

For the most part, I followed the same format that I followed with the Men of TLC. As much as possible, my intent was recreating the intimate environment that I had established in Detroit. During this workshop, however, I found myself doing a tremendous amount of teaching – more than I planned to. However, as in the prior workshop, I showed the trailer for Jennifer Sobel's *The Mask You Live In*, to which I received some feedback. In the effort to encourage the men to focus their thoughts on men's responsibility in the prevention of violence towards women, I showed another video featuring educator, filmmaker, and author Jackson Katz. Jackson Katz is one of the leading anti-sexist male activists in the United States, and the creator of the gender violence prevention program, Mentors in Violence Prevention. This particular video was taken from a TED Talk Series recorded in November 2012 in San Francisco. In the video, Katz speaks passionately about the issue of *gender violence* not being solely a women's issue. He makes the sound argument that that this type of violence is just as much a male issue – especially due to the fact that males are the overwhelming perpetrators of these crimes. I preceded that video with some statistics on gender violence in the hopes of getting the men primed for the video. Additionally, I supported the video with an exercise that I read in about In Jackson Katz's book, *Macho Paradox: Why Some Men Hurt Women and How All Men Can Help*. In the exercise, I had the men list all of the

precautions they take to prevent themselves from being sexually abused when going out at night. I then had men list the precautions that women have to take when they go out at night. The purpose of the exercise was to give the men a visual representation showing the disparity as it relates to actions taken by both genders to prevent themselves from being sexually harassed or abused. The reaction to the exercise, which I'll speak about in my Observations section, helped to shine a brighter light on victims of sexual violence and men's response to it.

For the most part, the workshop was unremarkable. With a few exceptions, I followed the same format as the prior workshop. My take was that I laid some heavy material on these men that they hadn't been accustomed to hearing. While participation was sporadic, I had given them a lot to ingest.

Observations

As stated earlier, the workshop contained much of the same information as the previous workshop. Consequently, I didn't encounter any groundbreaking revelations. I did make note of comments that supported my prior research, as well as comments that helped me to expand my own awareness of gender violence. One comment helped me to understand the complexities involved in gender violence when labels such as *masculine* or *feminine* are attached to it. Other comments spoke to the varied effects of patriarchy and how it can prevent men from recognizing gender violence as *their* issue as well.

During the exercise where men were attempted to list the measures that they take to prevent themselves from being sexually abused, I certainly was not surprised that the men had a hard time listing any precautions. One brother, however, raised his hand and began listing a few measures that he takes as he goes out in the evening. He revealed to the group that he now embraced these measures because he had been sexually assaulted

before. While it should not matter, this participant was known to be a same gender-loving man within the church – which was not unusual because our church is known to be radically inclusive. I couldn't help but notice the silence of the other men as he made his comments. I attribute this to two facts -many heterosexual men in the church are still making the transition to embrace same gender-loving couples within the church, and many have rarely heard stories of men being sexually abused. After mentioning the precautions that he takes, I asked a woman, who happened to be in the room where the workshop was taking place, to list the measures that she takes to avoid being sexually harassed or abused. True to form, she was able to list a variety of actions she takes to avoid such incidents. It was not surprising that some of the measures she listed were the same ones that the previous male participant listed. I silently noted to myself that, like women, there are same gender-loving men who also have to concern themselves with being sexually assaulted by violent, same-gender loving men, as well as by violent, homophobic men. While this was not related to the expressed subject of my project, the revelation was significant nonetheless. I revisited these thoughts later in the workshop when the men offered more comments after the Jackson Katz video.

After viewing the video, one of the participants expressed his belief that most of the men in attendance had been in environments, whether through sports, the military, or simply by being at the barbershop, where women were objectified, debased or the subjects of men's misogynistic views. In response to Katz's invitation for men to see this violence as man's issue, he acknowledged that the most difficult thing for most men to do was to challenge other men when they degraded women. Whether he knew it or not, he was validating much of the research I found that stated, whether it's patriarchy or other

explicit forms of violence against women, large numbers of men are complicit by being silent. Another participant, while revisiting the list they developed that contained the *masculine* and *feminine* traits, pointed out that the real problem was the use of the terms *masculine* and *feminine*. When looking at the traits listed under the word *feminine*, he said that most men would acknowledge that they are indeed *compassionate* and *caring*. However, he also said that if men were told that those traits were *feminine* in nature, then they might distance themselves from any association with those words. An interesting point about the power of labels, I thought. The same participant then went on to ask why there wasn't any talk about the men who *don't* commit these acts of violence. He believed that the majority of men are not violent or abusive – therefore we need to be addressing their reasons for not participating in the violent culture, because, in his words, “We know why the others commit violence!” At this time, the participant who had previously revealed that he was sexually assaulted, responded to the comment by saying that he believed most men *do* indeed contribute to gender violence – just in a different form. Just as he began to share his story of getting raped, the first respondent interrupted him, as if he had no interest in hearing his story. I allowed this spirited exchange to proceed for moment in the hopes of uncovering the underlying issues that were motivating it. The first respondent was under the impression that he was being criticized for saying that most ‘men didn’t participate in gender violence.’ And in fact, he was receiving some pushback as the other participant thought that men *did* participate – albeit unknowingly. The respondent who shared his story of rape was attempting to reveal how he had been sexually victimized by someone who *thought* the sexual encounter was consensual. In essence, he was using his personal experience to make the point that many

men who think they *aren't* complicit in sexual violence, *are* complicit without even knowing it. By this time, however, the point was lost on the other participant. At a certain point, I intervened and chalked the exchange up to *people having different perspectives*. I couldn't help but wonder if the initial interruption by the first respondent was due to being put off by the other respondent's sexual orientation, exacerbated by his story of being raped. Surely, it was an example of two narratives conflicting with each other.

The exchange between these two men invited me to see the complexity of this issue. It reminded me of the deep work that needs to be done to for men to accept their role in helping to reduce gender violence. I also concluded this first workshop with the Men of Spirit and Truth lacked the engagement I desired because I was still fairly new to the group and trust hadn't been fully established as of yet. In reflection, the ease at which an intimate space was created with the Men of TLC was most likely due a combination of factors - their familiarity with me, their exposure to transformative principles by virtue of their attendance at Transforming Love Community, and by the reflective nature of the recovery programs they participated in. These factors ensured that they were primed and anxious to discover more about themselves and their narratives.

All in all, I was pleased with the Men of Spirit and Truth workshop. The next workshop would focus more directly on images of God, religious indoctrination, and the oppression of women.

Workshop #2

Workshop # 2, with the Men of Spirit and Truth (M.O.S.T.), took place on November 22, 2014. The turnout for the workshop was much less than I expected. For the majority of the workshop, only 3 men were present. The fourth participant arrived later. My original intent was to direct the dialogue towards a discussion of early images of God

and how the images produced a view of women that subsisted through the centuries. My hope was that Workshop #1 had increased the men's awareness of gender violence, and prepared them to think about how men could help to decrease this violence. An initial goal was to invite men to see how religious and biblical roots served to create a climate that was unfavorable to women – a climate that acts as an incubator for violence. As a guide, I created a PowerPoint presentation to accompany the workshop. (See Appendix G)

Since only 3 participants were initially present for the workshop, I decided that this was a perfect opportunity to create an intimate space among the men – much more perhaps than a workshop would've provided. I decided to forego the PowerPoint presentation for that moment and began by simply asking the men about roles and perceptions of women that were impressed upon them by the church. What follows is a partial transcript of that conversation. While the transcript also is noted in the Chapter 3, it is recounted here to indicate the flow of Workshop #2 and how it fit the aims of the workshop.

The dialogue is contained within a question/answer format. I was the questioner (Q) and the participants are noted as A1, A2, and A3, respectively.

Q: Growing up, how did you see gender roles actualized in the home or in the church? How did you see women treated in the church? What roles did you see them in? What were you taught, from a religious standpoint, about women?

A1: I grew up Missionary Baptist Church. Typically a woman would be called a missionary. She could be an elder but she couldn't have the role

of a pastor, and even if she did have more of a teaching ministry or preaching ministry, she still had to maintain the title of a missionary or maybe even an evangelist. But then she couldn't have her own church, even if she was the predominant speaker. She still had to be married to maybe a bishop or a pastor.

A1: Even though she was the one who handled the crux of the preaching and administrative duties, it couldn't be her church. It had to be his church and she was just basically in that role.

A1: And I heard a lot of the teachings about women are to be silent in church. So they could only go so far even though you clearly could see that this was this woman's church and she had the anointing for ministry in that church.

A1: But her husband basically sat there quietly and he was the pastor of the church.

A1: So I saw that a lot and as times have changed, it's a little different. A lot of times they will still let her be the pastor but then her husband has to be the senior pastor or the bishop.

A1: But I see that. A lot of women that I knew in those circles, they kind of left the church and kind of became independent or joined up with another group so that they could fulfill their role as the pastor of the church.

A1: So I saw that a lot.

A2: Mine was Southern Baptist. Well, my grandparents raised me Southern Baptist and similar. Only difference is, their women did not have a particular role. They were on the church Mother Board.

A2: The deacons ran and oversaw anything the Mother Board did or a church organization did. The pastor had a, let's say, chauvinist role. He got a Cadillac every year. He had two churches.

A1: Mine drove a Lincoln.

A2: So I mean, that was my initial upbringing and understanding. And the pastor, he could do no wrong. Although figuratively he could do no wrong, his morals weren't always the same way, so.

A2: So that made me...this is how I saw things. You saw a man in a role and at that time, the pastor went to dinner at the deacon's homes after church.

A3: And they did the big meals?

A2: Yes. Therefore, the chicken...the big piece of chicken went to him.

A3: He got it first. The head of the household.

A2: And the kids had the smaller table out in the den

A2: So you had to...you knew this role. So that's what...and the women were the servants, although they had the power and they were the majority in the church.

A2: They did not have the leadership roles, as you said before.

A3: I was actually married to, as you said, a minister. She was a lady and it was odd because the pastor was anointed, highly anointed. But every

role that the women had in the church was pretty much to be submissive to the man.

A3: I mean, literally be submissive. If he had sweat on his brow, they would jump off and wipe the sweat off his brow. You know, it's to the point to where he, as you said, he couldn't do any wrong. And that's what was taught in the church. And I'm from Louisiana where you have different...I'll say you may have four churches on the street.

A3: Each one of them may be different in some aspect where you have one preaching, he'd get a Cadillac. He'd get a brand new car, brand new house.

A3: The churches provided everything for you.

A3: Anything that he says, even if the congregation knew it's wrong, they're going to support him because they're mindset is, "He can't do any wrong."

A3: "He's anointed by God."

A3: "God is guiding this man." Now he's a human being...he has an affair, he has a kid. You know, he's doing everything – I say an everyday man but...a fleshly man does.

A3: But they're acknowledging him as he being almost above God. Because he can't do any wrong.

A3: And it's just...it's crazy. I mean, now that I can sit back and think back to that time...and you weren't taught to challenge him.

A3: Anything and everything he said. That was it. That was the law.

A3: So even if you had a difference in opinion, and a lot of people, as I said where I'm from, you have four churches. So they left one church and went to the church right down the street, which was just almost the same, just maybe a little bit more leeway to the women

A3: They all would preach. The pastor would start off saying one or two things and he'd say, "Okay, well, so-and-so is going to say some words for today." And that'd be the rest of the service. He would never move. And again, he could be sitting in the pew – a row of chairs – he'd sweat. They'd jump up. These are the women...I mean, he could do this himself.

A3: If he's at the podium and someone saw a piece of paper fall, somebody would jump off the front row, grab the piece of paper almost before it hit the floor.

A3: So it's...for me, I'm enjoying my life now because I'm being educated.

A3: I'm always curious, so I'm being educated now. And that's – that is helpful to me.

A2: And we have evolved and I'm sure here in this spiritual community where we are now, we know that we have evolved, not to the extreme, but we saw it many times in the old building, in the cathedral, we saw a lot of that same stuff.

A2: Even though we had a female pastor on staff, I saw guys actually have their brows wiped and shoes tied in the pulpit.

A2: And I said, you know, and I really actually still had that same psychological thought behind a man of God being... like God.

A2: Because he could do no wrong, I had put my family into...I was telling my son, I said, "I was so crazy that I put...I would not do anything unless I found out it was okay with the bishop.

A2: And I thought that was crazy. And I really, seriously...

A2: I said, now I look back and I say man, what was I thinking? I couldn't be my own...I had to ask a man of God or think that if he did it or if he said it –

A1: I was like that-

A2: I remember so vividly telling my kids on the way home in the car and they even laugh at me now. "Bishop said..."

A3: So that was your law. That was your law of the house.

A2: That's how we're going to do it. And I just realized that...religious leaders...

Q: You know, and with that said, I'm Missionary Baptist, so it was the same, whether Detroit or Georgia, Missionary Baptists are the same. You know, they're the same way. So the women weren't in the pulpit. They were all my Sunday School teachers growing up.

A3: Oh definitely. They were definitely that. That was their role.

Q: And then they ran the Missionary Society. You know, they were the nurses and stuff like that.

A1: They could preach on women or something like that.

A3: Yeah, they did – because women could consider all female things.

A3: Well, I'm sorry. What we were taught when we were younger as being a female thing.

A3: Because now that we have evolved, we know better now.

A3: We didn't know any better. We went by what someone told us, whether it was the elder person who grew up, again – listening to everything that the minister said and all they did was pass it on to us.

A3: So that's all that we were doing.

A3: So that's why I said, we're blessed in the sense of being able to think for ourselves now.

Q: How people can be in a church or in a system, whether it's at work or whether it's church or whatever, know something is wrong, but still act within this system – a system that indoctrinated you to be aggressive? How do you turn that off when you're in a relationship?

Q: How is it, even though you know...how is it affecting you when you get home? How does it affect your relationship?

A2: It's actually funny because I was thinking, man, because it's scripture. In scripture, you know, and it's almost shameful to think about it. You know, you quote Scriptures, especially men

A2: You know, we'll quote the first part of the Scripture.

A3: That's right.

A1: That's right, yep.

[Talking over each other]

A2: "Women, submit yourselves to your husband." And we'll stop there.

A2: I remember using this. I'm going to be vulnerable and say I did this.

Y'all see Mary and y'all laugh at me.

A2: So that's the crux of it. That's what you knew, what was preached to you. You just imitate what you already heard from the pulpit.

A2: And God said, "Women, submit yourselves to your husbands."

A2: And he don't go no further than that.

A1: No, that's it.

A2: Remember, I was Southern Baptist, Missionary Baptist – when I first came here was the first time I heard pages turn in the Bible.

A2: You used to be in the cathedral, you would hear it when the Bishop would preach. You would hear pages turning.

A2: You're like, "Oh, they're reading."

A2: But where I was raised, it wasn't a read. It was a telling.

A2: They'd tell you exactly what the Scripture was – they'd tell you. And in my grandmother's church – it was so crazy. I don't know if he could even read. The pastor would have a woman...he had a woman. He's say, "Read!" And she would read all that scripture.

A3: That is so true. That is exactly how they did it. That could be true why a lot of pastors...they could not read.

A2: And that's not funny, but that's deep.

A3: That is so true, though. Now I'm thinking that is so true because he always...the pastor himself never touched the Bible.

A3: The Bible sat at the end of the pulpit, throughout the whole service. Throughout whatever was in the church.

A3: He would come there. He had one person, whether it be a man or a woman, do the reading. And once they read, he would speak from that...his interpretation of it. Not what the church would get or not what each member would get, but his interpretation.

A3: And if you're following that minister, what he said pretty much, that's like planting a seed. He done planted a seed. Now you may not have ever thought about it like that, but once he planted that seed, "Oh, oh, I never thought about it like that."

A3: One thing could happen...

A3: To bring something home similar to what he just said, "He was so right." You know, back when you used to be like, "That don't sound right!" when you were first here. "That don't sound right. Why would he tell me that?" "That's my wife. Why would I...no." One thing sounds similar to what he said, so..."I knew it...girl you don't know what you're talking about. Pastor said this, this, and this." You know, you're attacking your wife and you don't even know it.

After quite a bit of dialogue, I directed the men's attention to the PowerPoint presentation, *Images of God: Women, Gender, and Violence*. Again, with such a small group of men, the plan morphed into an informal viewing of the slides, accompanied by comments. The format of the slides was such that men could see the progression, or lack of, men's perceptions of women. The slides started with the Genesis story of creation and

proceeded to quote what many of the early church fathers said about women. Many of those same quotes can be found in my chapter on *Christianity, Women, and Violence*. (Chapter 2) Additional slides displayed how, in many instances, Christian thought remains unchanged as it pertains to women's roles and duties in and outside of the church. The PowerPoint came to a close with some words from the African-American abolitionist, journalist, and orator Frederick Douglass, speaking about the rights of women - and concluded with a quote that I hoped would linger in the minds of the participants. "*Right is of no sex - Truth is of no color – God is the Father of us all, and we are brethren*" ⁵⁸

Observations

Although the attendance at the workshop was not what I expected, the intimacy of the smaller group allowed me to see the impact of the workshop in a much more pronounced way. The men that attended were excited, passionate, and enthused with the opportunity to discuss their spiritual journeys. These men were already in the midst of spiritual transformation, so they were more than ready to look at the narratives that defined their religious perspectives. Additionally, the small group allowed me to share the narratives that had shaped me, as well as allow all of us to see the commonalities in the stories shared.

The men were able to clearly see how their prior religious indoctrination caused problems in their relationships and most importantly, how women have been portrayed by and through the interpretations of biblical texts and so-called *godly* men. All the participants were shocked by the words of early church fathers concerning women. Their

⁵⁸ Biographies, "Frederick Douglass," http://www.pbs.org/blackpress/news_bios/douglass.html.

shock reminded me that even well-intentioned men have the privilege of ignoring the oppression of women. The point was made personal, however, when the men talked about some of their personal experiences when the workshop first opened up. They all could see very clearly how their own religious indoctrination had impacted them and their relationships. If I had to do again, I would've shown the slide presentation first, complete with the Genesis creation stories, so the men could follow a timeline starting with the origins of this particular *thought* right up to the point where conflict manifested for them personally. Nonetheless, the dialogue inspired the men to revisit and reflect on the adoption of these external narratives and encouraged them to continue in the *re-scripting* of their respective stories.

The low turnout of the workshop forced me to think about what more I could've done to encourage the men to return for Workshop #2. I considered that I could've done more in the prior workshop to engage them in a more significant and intimate way. Instead, I had spent more time teaching and explaining as a way to build trust and solicit buy-in. As a result, I accepted the fact that they might not have connected the larger purpose our gathering. The other possibility, of course, is that they had no further interest in the subject of violence towards women. I did, however, consider the workshop a huge success by virtue of the engaged few that were present. When I compared the workshops with the Men of TLC with the Men of Spirit and Truth, I concluded that in order to transform the thinking of men, particularly when it comes to ideas of masculinity and the perceptions of women, a significant amount of time needs to be spent in deconstructing the embedded narratives of men. The Men of TLC, as a whole, displayed more of a readiness to engage in the deconstruction process. Again, this was more than likely due to their

involvement in recovery programs that forced them to see *themselves* with more clarity. In my work, I've found that there is something about *brokenness* that prepares a man to surrender and reflect on the thinking and behavior that *broke* him. In the future, I would be well to remember that you can't *fix* someone who won't admit that they are *broke*.

PHASE 3 - DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

My last phase of data collection and analysis came in the form of a survey. (See Appendix J) The survey would offer some quantitative and qualitative data that I could use to draw conclusions from. Reflecting on my prior attempt to conduct a survey with the Men of Transforming Love Community, I created this survey to be easily understood and as stress-free as possible. All of the questions were in a multiple-choice format and each question contained a variety of choices that men could choose from. The men were asked to answer the survey questions based on their early Christian experience. When considering my Research Questions, the answers from this survey would offer insight into the theological and biblical roots for patriarchal images of God, and the intersectionality of gender roles based on these images. In the letter I sent to the men to solicit their participation, I was intentional to not mention that the project was going to measure their perceptions in the context of violence. (See Appendix F) Based on my prior experience with men, I knew that the mention of *violence* was not a good jump off point. While the survey did not give me any information about specific acts of violence perpetrated by these men, their answers did show me how men's perceptions can contribute to an environment where violence can exist.

On October 11, 2015, I sent out surveys, via Survey Monkey, to 62 personal friends of mine. I had no criteria for the participants other than being male. My assumption was that the males who participated did so out of a genuine interest in the

subject, a commitment to supporting a genuine friend, and/or fact that they were familiar with some of my prior work as a minister. I received 40 survey back, 38 complete and 2 incomplete. The pages that follow give a demographic profile of the participants, along with relevant implications for each demographic.

Demographic Profile Tables

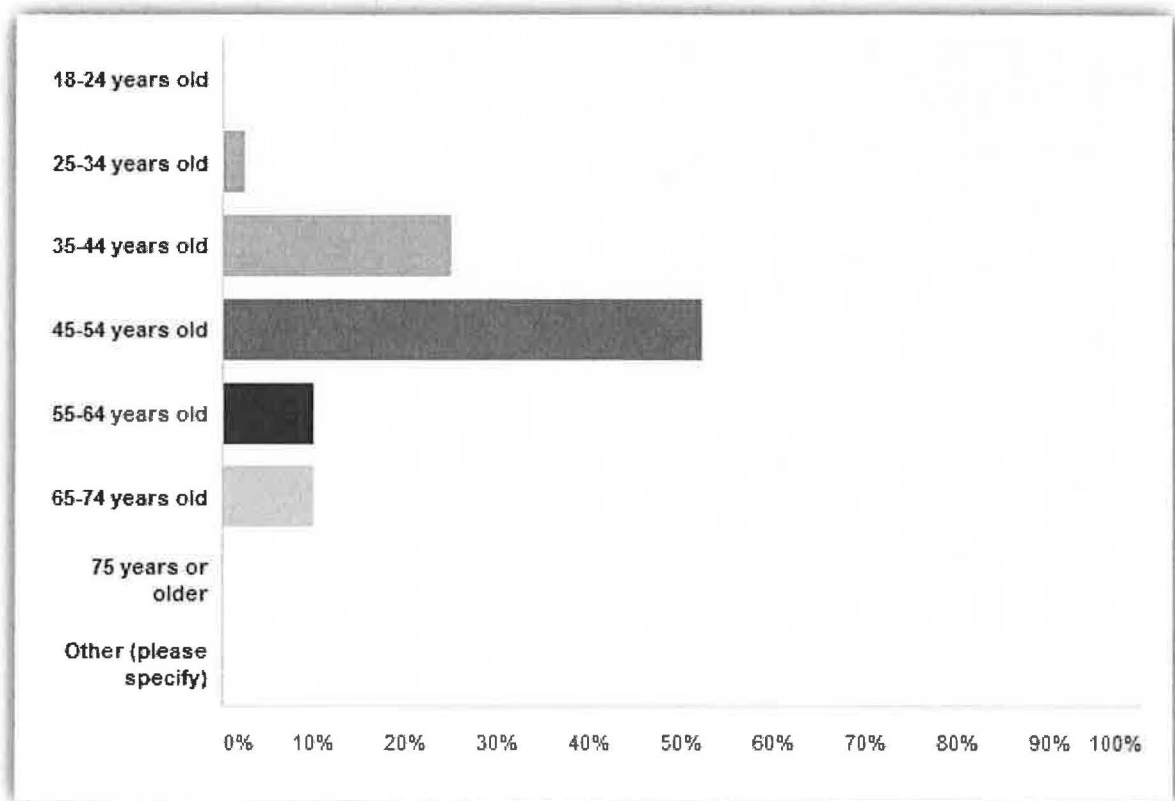


Table 4 Demographic Profile Age

As seen on the above graph, 52.5% of the respondents were within the 45-54 age range. This information shows me that the vast majority of my friends fall within the same age range as me.

Analysis and Implications

While the project did not measure the intersection of age with images of God and perceptions of women, I found that answers to the survey did not vary significantly

according to age. The one respondent that fell between the 25-34 age range, had very much the same perspectives as all other respondents, including the four respondents who fell in the 65-74 age range. The initial indication, based on other answers the men gave, is that regardless of age, many of the men indoctrinated into Christianity still receive the same messages about women

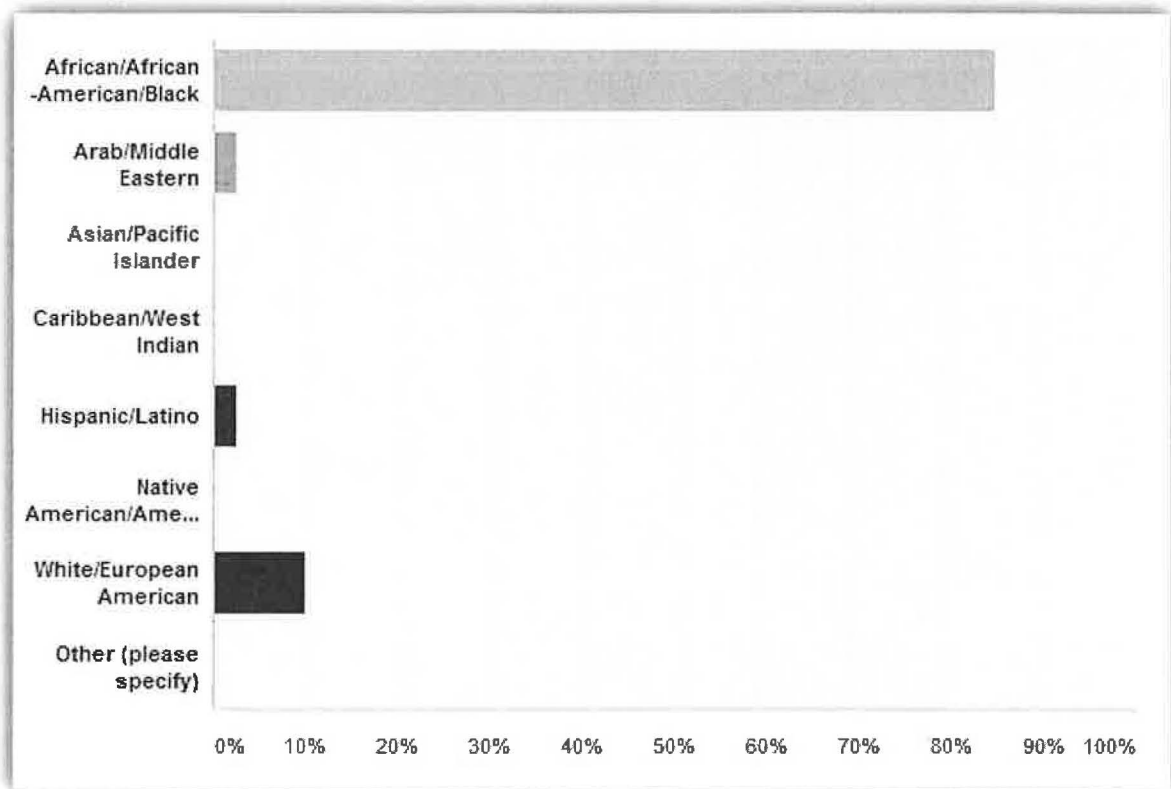


Table 5 Demographic Profile: Racial Ethnic Group

As seen on the above chart, 85% of the respondents were of African/African-American/Black descent, 10% identified as White/European American, 2.5% identified as Arab/Middle Eastern, and 2.5% identified as Hispanic/Latino.

Analysis and Implications

Again, I did not research the impact of race on the subject matter of the project, however, I could surmise by the responses that the images of God provided to men, and

the messages they receive about women, cross racial lines. This conclusion suggests that the images of God and related perceptions of women hold a significance that outweighs race and ethnicity. My own experience supports this. I've experienced more conflict in my life due to my perceptions of God and unhealthy ideas of masculinity, than I have from solely being Black – though being of African-American descent has undoubtedly impacted my idea of manhood, as well as my relationship to God. This consideration offers tremendous opportunities for exploration in my future work with men.

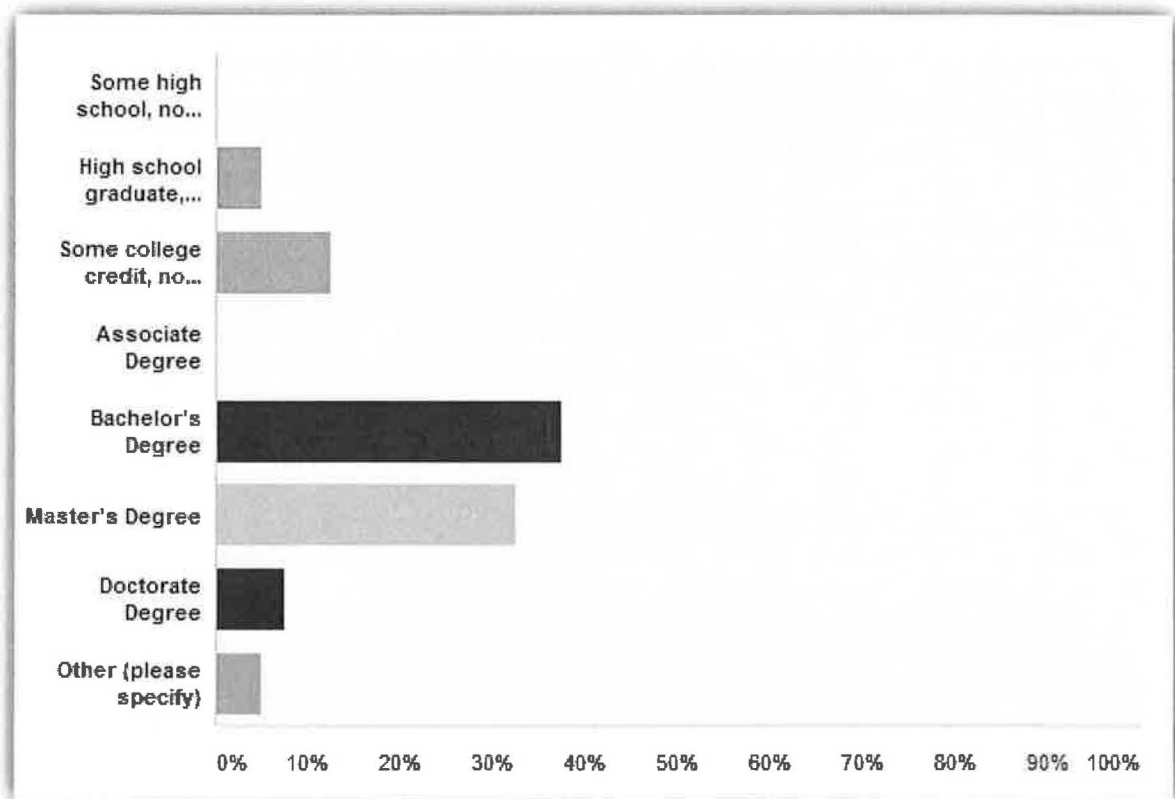


Table 6 Demographic Profile: Education

The above graph indicates that, out of the 40 respondents, 37.5% held a Bachelor's Degree, 32.5% held a Master's Degree, 12.5% had some college credit, 7.5% held a Doctorate Degree as their highest level of education completed. 5% had a high school diploma and 5% listed Other as their highest level of school.

Analysis and Implications

There was no significant variation of answers based on the educational level of the respondents. There was no indication that higher academic levels translated into significantly different views about God or women. The implication for me was that religious education often trumps academic education when it relates to perceptions that men have about women. An analysis of the responses proved that whether men perceived God to be loving and compassionate or angry, jealous, and vindictive – their early perceptions of women did not fluctuate.

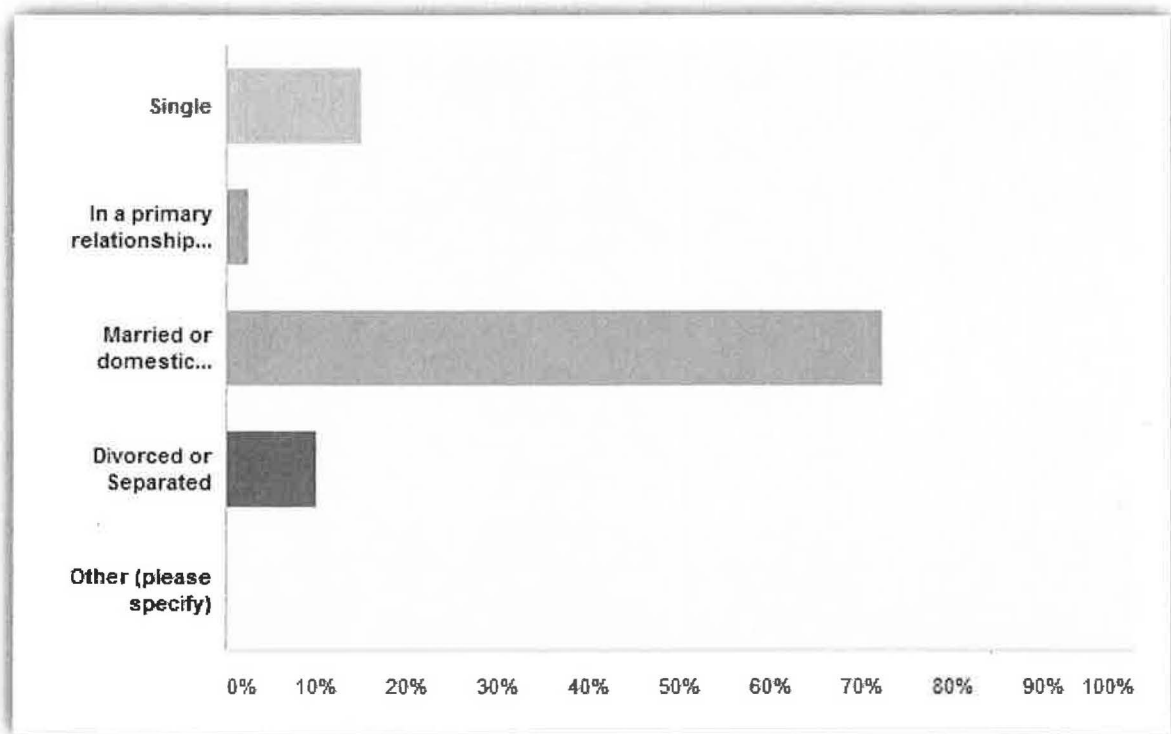


Table 7 Demographic Profile: Relationship Status

The above chart indicates that 72.5% of men surveyed were married or in a domestic partnership, 15% were Single, 10% Divorced or Separated, and 2.5% were in a primary relationship with a significant other.

Analysis and Implications

I was interested to see if the men's attitudes about women would vary based on their relationship status. Most of the men were married – therefore I attributed their evolved views about women to this and the fact that the majority of the men surveyed were above the age of 45. While most had been infected by the same ideas about women while growing up, they now viewed women as equal partners – even though many still embraced the male as the head of the household. Their responses, however, implied that the experience of being in a relationship caused them to rethink their views about women. One respondent even mentioned that his views on women had changed since becoming a husband and father of daughters. Respondents who were divorced or separated also reported an evolved view of women. Two respondents began their answer with, “My views have now changed about...,” or “I now feel that women...” The responses certainly indicate a change in views that might have been inspired by the unfortunate demise of a marriage or prior relationship. These conclusions are also supported by my personal experience. The experience of divorce and a now healthy and thriving marriage have served to transform my views about God, and my *relational* success with my wife.

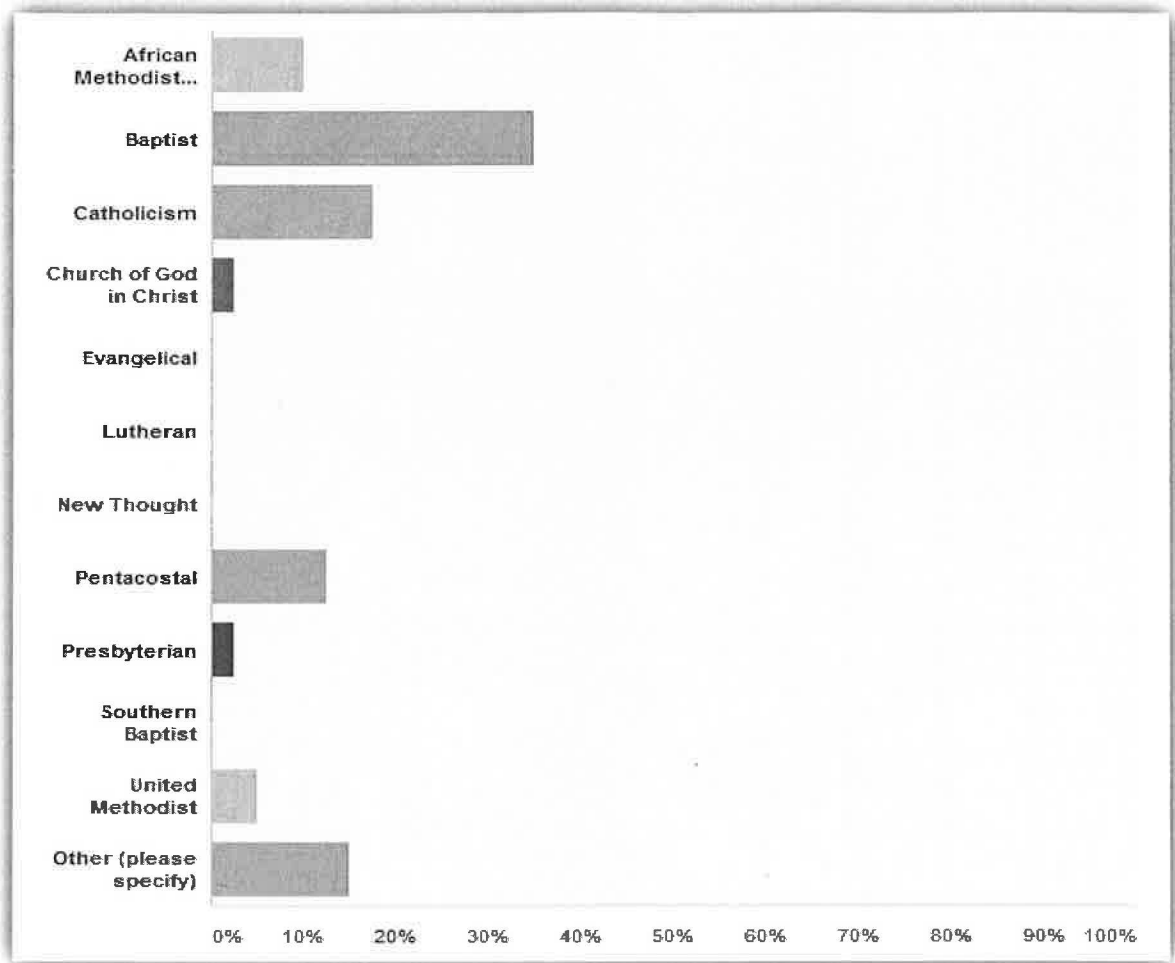


Table 8 Religious Denomination

A variety of denominations were represented by respondents. 35% of respondents were raised as Baptist, 17.5% Catholic, 12.5% Pentecostal, 10% African Methodist Episcopal, 5% United Methodist, 2.5% Presbyterian, 2.5% Church of God in Christ, 15% identified Other as their early denomination.

Analysis and Implications

I wanted to see if there was a significant difference in the messages that men receive about God or women, depending on the early denominational influence. I found no pattern that would indicate that any one of the denominations outweighed another in terms of perceptions created by their teachings. Extreme, as well as liberal views about

God exist within each denomination. This indicates to me that specific *church teachings* could have a greater influence on a congregant than a denomination. It remains, however, that regardless of the denomination, early teachings about the diminished status of women remained consistent.

Image and Perception Profile Tables

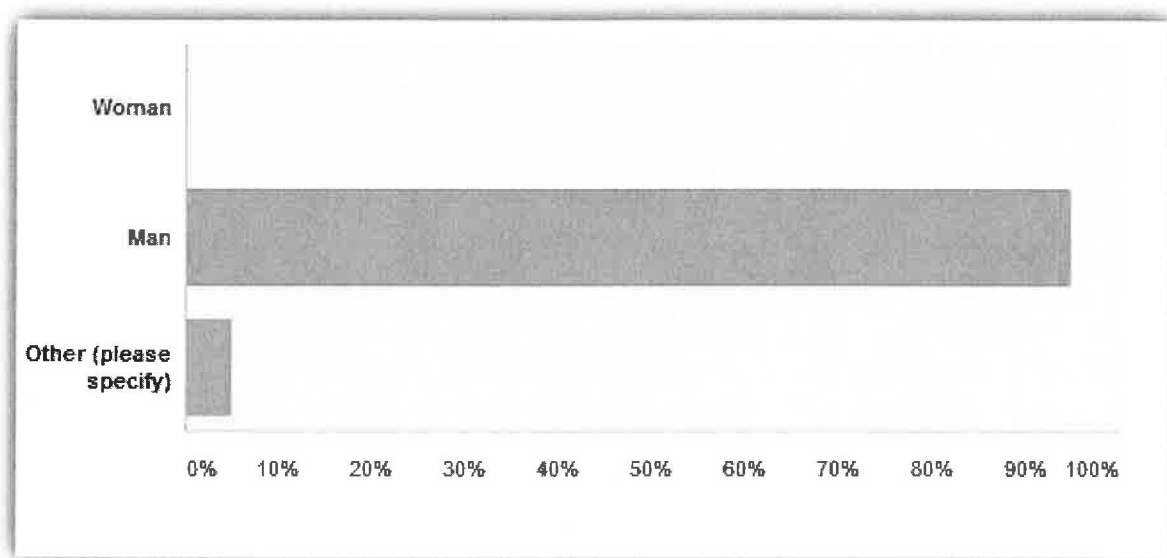


Table 9 Image and Perception Profile: Earliest Recollection of God

According to the above chart, when asked about their earliest recollection of God's gender, 95% of the men surveyed indicated God as a *man*. 5% classified God as *Other*.

Analysis and Implications

This answer is highly significant as it has huge implications for every facet of this project. If men are taught, early on, that they are made in the image of God, and that God exists in the form of a man - then by association, man sees himself as God, while those who don't fit the image are less than God. This is the starting point in which women are

subjugated to inferior status. It also serves as the starting point in which the original images of God have to be deconstructed.

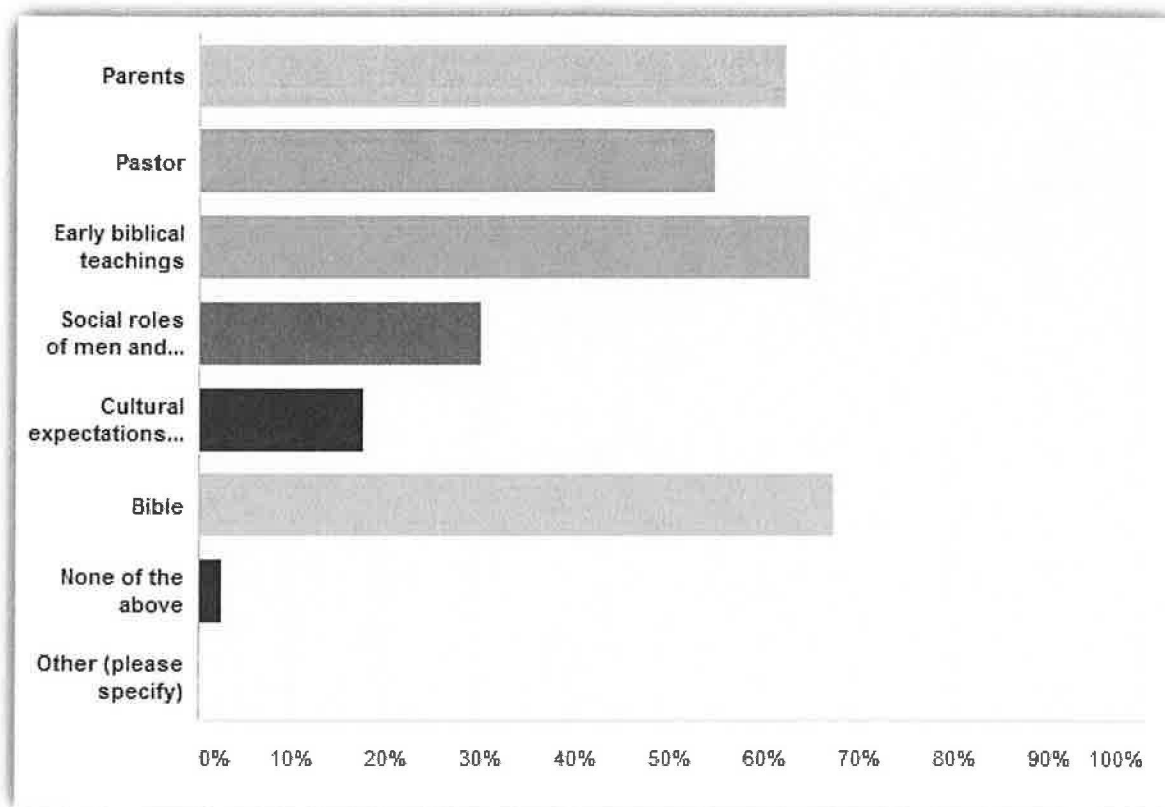


Table 10 Image and Perception Profile: Early Influences of God's Gender

The above graph represents the influences that contributed to the men's early understanding of God's gender. The top 4 influencers were the Bible 67.5%, Early biblical teachings 65%, Parents 62.5%, and Pastor 55%.

Analysis and Implications

Consistent with my hypothesis, the Bible and biblical teachings are the largest contributors to men's early perception of God. Parents and Pastors were significant influencers as well, and I attribute that to parents' and pastors' insistence on a strict adherence to the Bible. My assumption is that Social roles of Men and Women, and Cultural Expectations as influencers, act as support biblical expectation as well. This

implies that in order to assist men in creating alternative narratives, a radical reinterpretation of the Bible must first be undertaken. An inclusive reimagining of God will *trickle down* to ensure that women are embraced equitably in every sector of society.

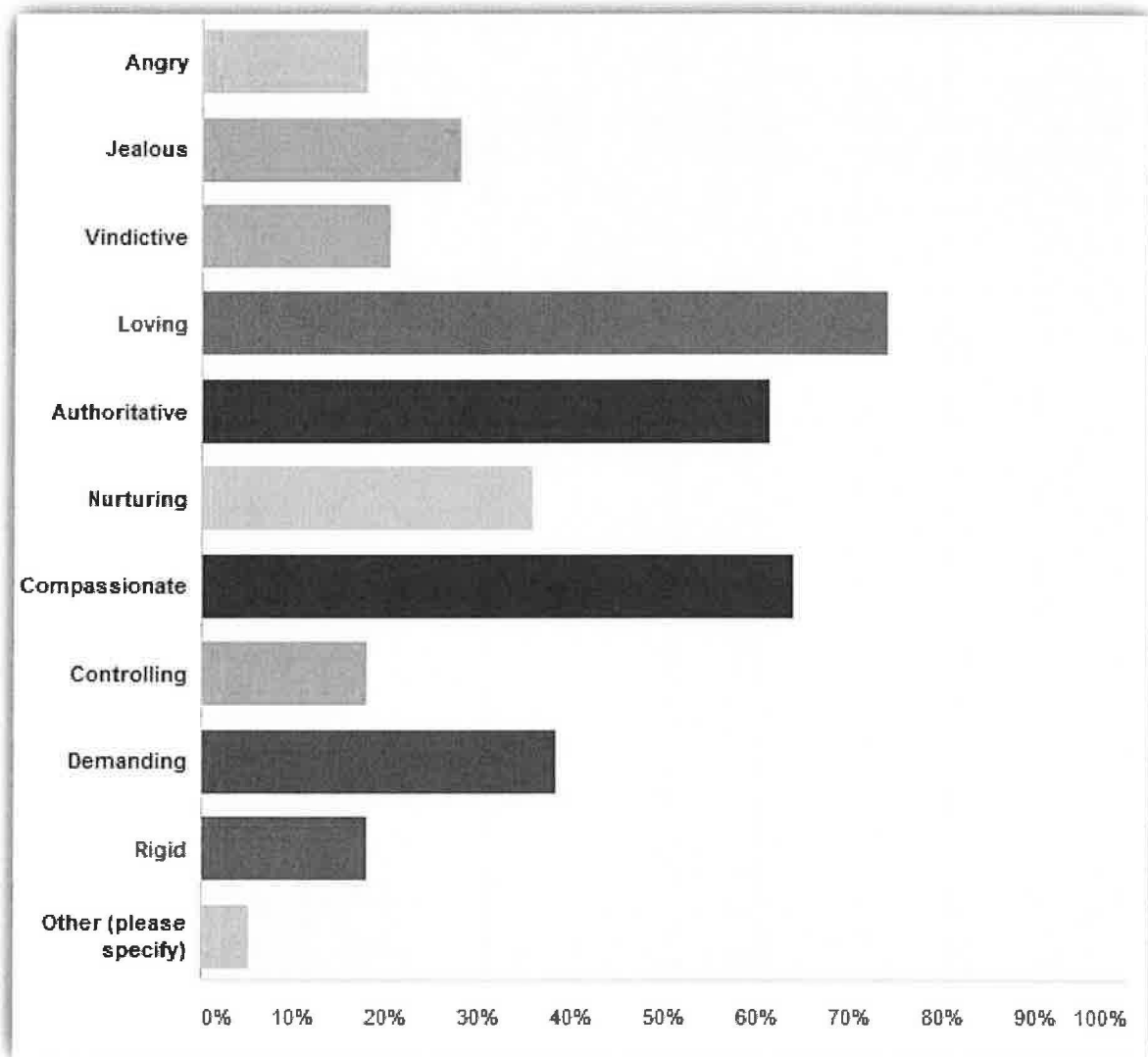


Table 11 Image and Perception Profile: Attributes of God

The above chart represents a ranking of men's early understanding of the Attributes of God. The attribute that men identified with God most was Loving 74.36%, followed by Compassionate 64.1%. The third highest ranked attribute was Authoritative

61.54%. Demanding 38.46% and Nurturing 35.9% rounded out the top five attributes assigned to God.

Analysis and Implications

I was intrigued to find that the respondents listed Loving and Compassionate as the top two attributes that they used to define God in the early spiritual development. Equally, I was surprised to see that the attribute Nurturing was almost 36%. My surprise was not due to an ignorance of the fact that God is often represented by these attributes through church teachings. Rather, what interested me is that the men would identify traits that are commonly associated with the feminine nature women. I was reminded of the first workshop with the Men of Spirit and Truth when one of the men suggested that most men identify with those same traits – until those traits are identified as *feminine*. The responses helped to crystallize a realization that perhaps men *do not* see the correlation between how they define, their ideas of masculinity, and the aversion to femininity that masculinity often dictates. The implications give me further cause to deepen my exploration of how these factors intersect. My sense is that this represents a major source of the conflict within men.

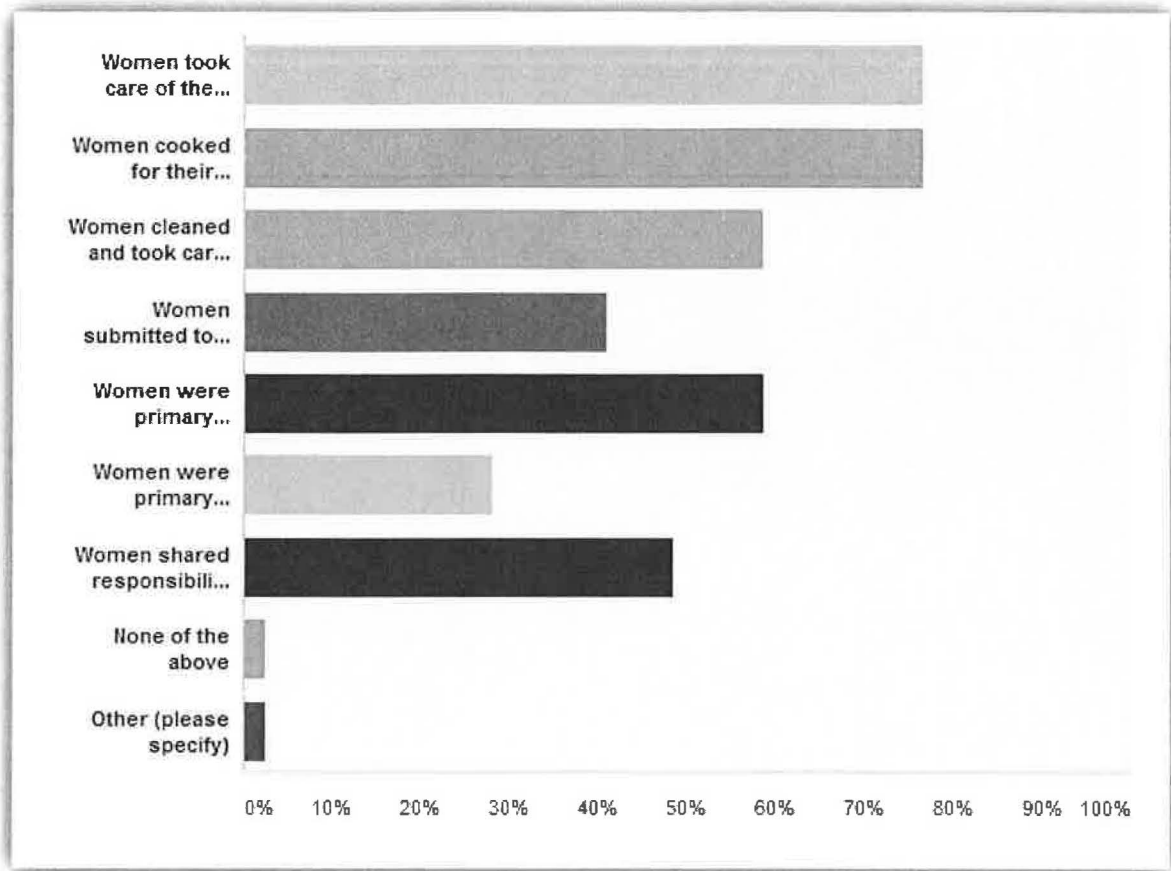


Table 12 Image and Perception Profile: Impressions of Women's Roles at Home

The chart above represents men's early impressions of women's roles at home. Men were asked to identify the roles that they saw women occupy during their early development. 76.92% of men indicated that the two most significant roles that women had was *taking care of the children and cooking for their families*. 58.97% indicated that *women cleaned and took care of the house*, and acted as *primary caretakers*. Almost half 48.72% said that *women shared responsibilities and decision making with men in matters of the household*. 41.03% indicated that *women submitted to men's authority*. Only 28.21% indicated that *women were primary decision makers* in the home.

Analysis and Implications

The responses indicate that regardless of all previous demographic data and perceptions of God, women still occupied traditional roles dictated by their perceived inferiority. The fact that less than 30% of the respondents were primary decision makers could be attributed to the fact that most grew up in two-parent households – in which case would still indicate that these women assumed traditional roles, not because they had to, but because the roles were most often dictated by patriarchy. The average age of men further indicates that their parents might've occupied a time in history when those roles were fully expected and accepted. The roles themselves in no way indicate *inferiority* per se, but it does indicate an expectation grounded in the concept of *submission*.

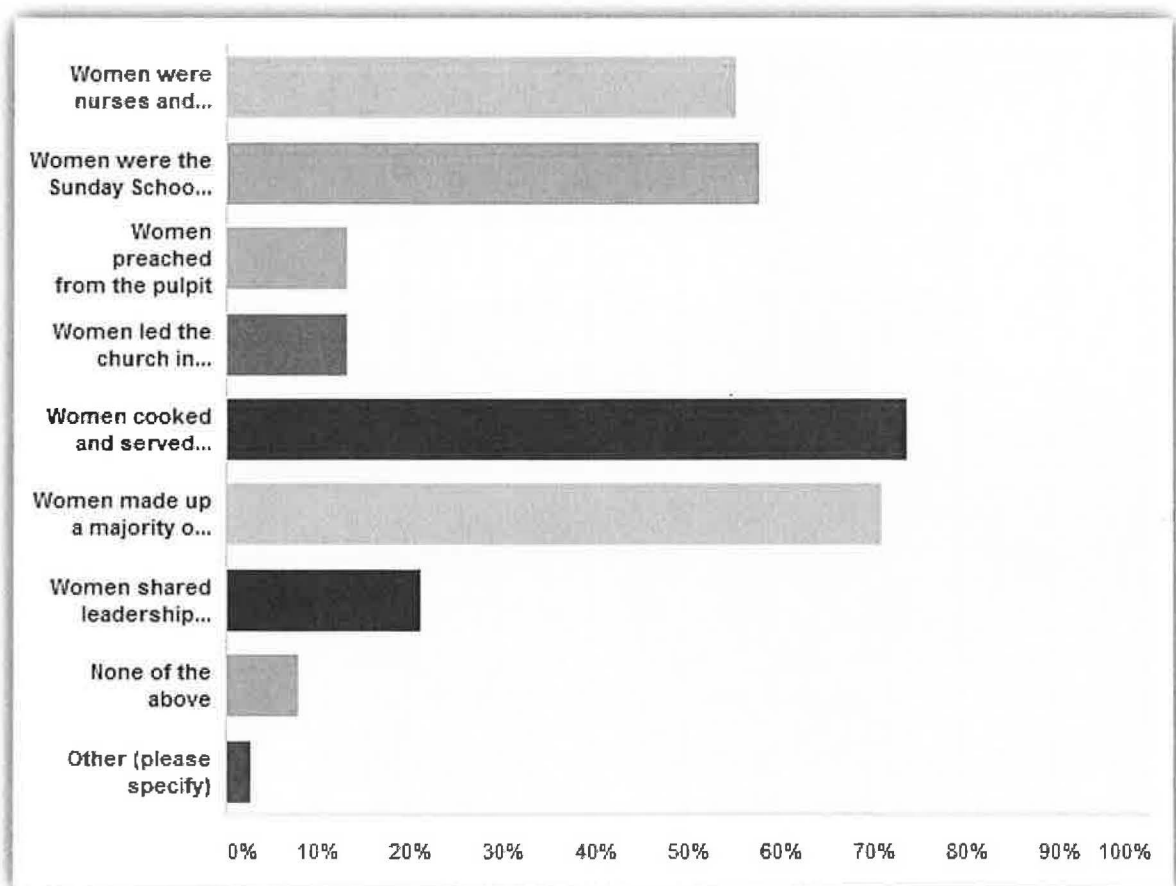


Table 13 Image and Perception Profile: Impressions of Women's Role in Church

The above chart represents the roles that women occupied in the church during the men's early development. 73.68% of men indicated that *women cooked and served church meals*. 57.89% said that *women were Sunday School teachers*, while 55.26% identified women as being *nurses and caretakers*. Interestingly, 71.05% of the men said that the *women made up the majority of the congregation*. As seen by the chart, a small percentage witnessed women preaching from the pulpit, leading the church in prayer, or sharing in the leadership of the church.

Analysis and Implications

As with women's roles at home, the roles that men saw women occupying at the church were and still are considered to be traditional roles that are born out of the presence of patriarchy. The fact that women made up a majority of the church, yet rarely occupied the pulpit, prayed, and shared in church leadership, supports this notion. The responses indicate a direct correlation between patriarchal images of God a woman's place in the church. The church, as God's house, only solidifies this relationship.

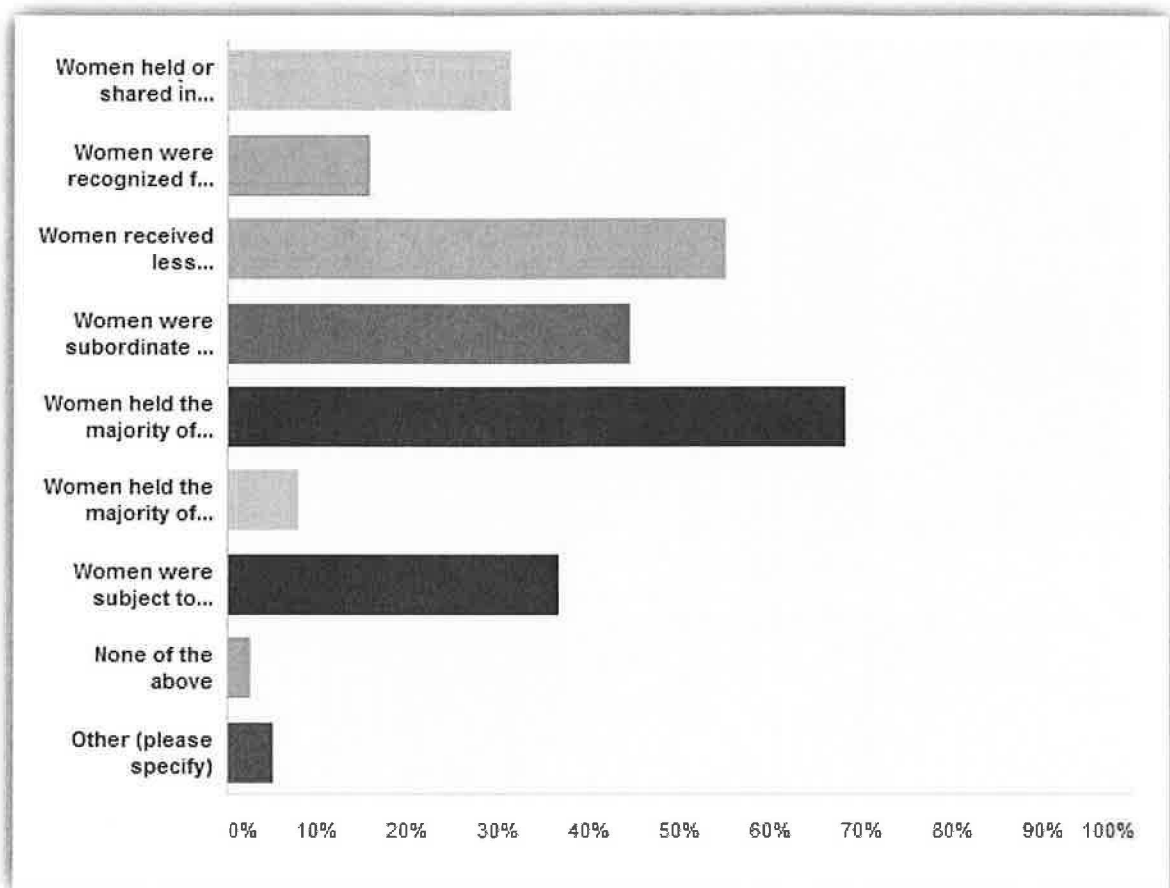


Table 14 Image and Perception Profile: Impressions of Women's Roles in the Workplace

The chart above represents men's early impressions of women's roles in the workplace. As with the home and the church, the majority of women's roles in the workplace occupied the same status. 68.42% of men reported that *women held the majority of the secretarial positions*. 55.26% of men indicated that *women received less recognition than men when performing the same job duties*, and 44.74% indicated that *women were subordinate to men*. 36.84% of men indicated that *women were subjected to sexual harassment by men*. 31.58% of men witnessed *women sharing in leadership positions in the same manner as men*.

Analysis and Implications

The information would suggest that there is a relationship between being in a subordinate position and being subjected to the harassment of male bosses. With men holding 70% of the leadership positions, the responses also imply that patriarchy did indeed dictate the roles that men saw women in, not just in the church and home, but in the workplace as well.

Scripture Interpretation Tables

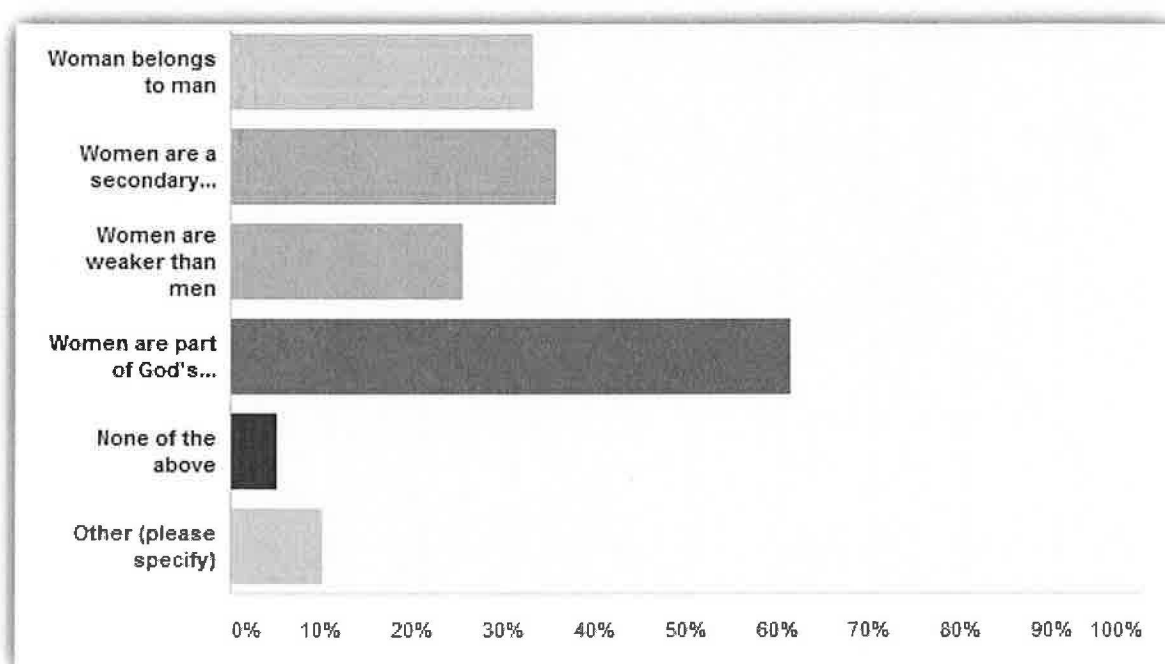


Table 15 Scripture Interpretation: Genesis 2:21-23: Women's Relationship with Men

The above chart represents men's responses when asked interpret the biblical account of creation found in Genesis 2:21-23. Men were asked to check all statements that represented their interpretation. 61.54% said that the story indicated that *women were part of God's original creation*. 35.9% said that it indicated that *women were secondary creations of God*. 33.33% said it indicates that *woman belongs to man*, and 25.64% reported that it implied *women are weaker than men*.

Analysis and Implications

Although 61.54% of men interpreted the scripture to mean that woman was part of God's original creation, I question the real meaning behind the interpretation. When analyzing the other questions, it still remains that, early on, that men didn't see women as having the same standing as men. With this in mind, I propose that the underlying meaning behind this response is that this creation story was part of God's *original plan*. That is, the accuracy of the story remains intact – God's original intent was for woman to be taken from man's rib. By virtue of woman coming from man's rib, she still is under the yoke of man. In future surveys, I will reword the question so that responses don't present a deceiving picture. The other responses were consistent with the notion that woman proceeds from man

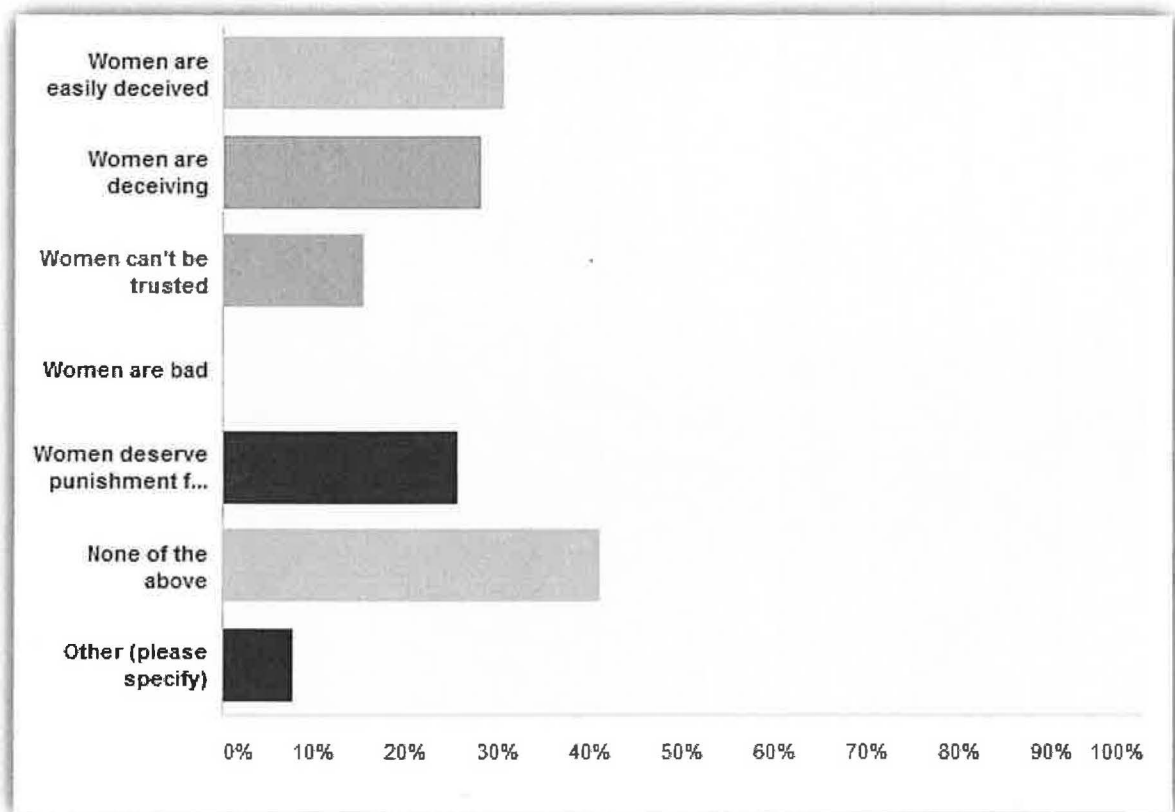


Table 16 Scripture Interpretation: Genesis 3:12-16: Perceptions of Women

The above graph represents men's perceptions of women based off the *Fall of Man* story found in Genesis 3:12-16. 41.03% of the respondents indicated that, out of the choices they were offered, None fit their particular interpretation of the scripture. 30.77% said that the scripture indicates that *women are easily deceived*. 28.21% gathered that *women are deceiving*, while 25.64% believe that the scripture indicates that *women deserve punishment for disobedience*.

Analysis and Implications

In retrospect, for those that responded *None of the Above*, I should've had a space for them to indicate what their particular interpretation of the scripture was. The answer would've provided more insight into how they make meaning of the story. However, an almost equal amount of men believed that the story conveyed the message that women are deceptive and easily deceived. This perception is consistent with the views of early church fathers reported in Chapter 2. Of significance as well is the fact that a quarter of the men felt that the scripture conveyed the message that women deserve punishment for disobedience. The percentages, regardless of how low, indicate that there are men who believe that the inferiority of women is not only biblically justified, but her punishment is justified as well. This could be the reason why many men feel as if violence against women is solely a women's issue. It also would explain why many men have a tendency to *blame the victim* when women are subjected to men's violence. These revelations provide opportunities for biblical stories to be reauthored and reinterpreted in ways that diminish blame and offer universal stories of redemption. The reinterpretation will relieve *Eve* and all women of the guilt and shame that has persisted through the centuries

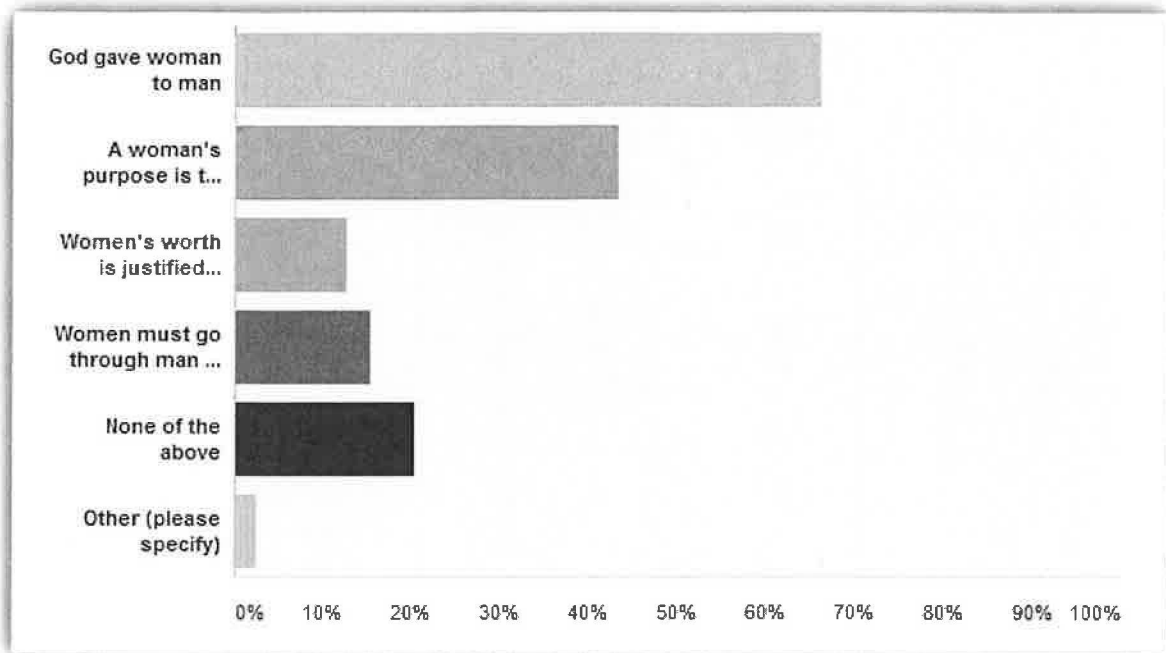


Table 17 Scripture Interpretation: 1Corinthians 11:7-9: Women's Purpose & Relationship to God

The above graph represents men's perceptions of a woman's purpose and identity in God as interpreted from 1 Corinthians 11:7-9. 66.67% interpreted that scripture to mean that *God gave man to woman*. 43.59% of men interpreted that scripture to imply that a *woman's purpose is to serve man*. 15.8% said the scripture implied that *women must go through man to get to God*, and 12.82% interpreted it to mean that a *women's worth is justified by man, not God*.

Analysis and Implications

The responses are consistent with men's interpretation of the creation story. While men felt that woman were a part of God's original creation, they still thought that she belonged to man, with the purpose to serve man. The dangerous implication is that women are not only here at man's bidding, but also exist to please man and satisfy his longings and urgings. The research presented in this project support that claim, as well as the voice that certain men have given to this truth. As long as this view persists, men will

think they have a right to women's bodies. This includes the right to usurp the choices and decisions that women make for themselves, for in a man's world – *God given rights* belong to men only.

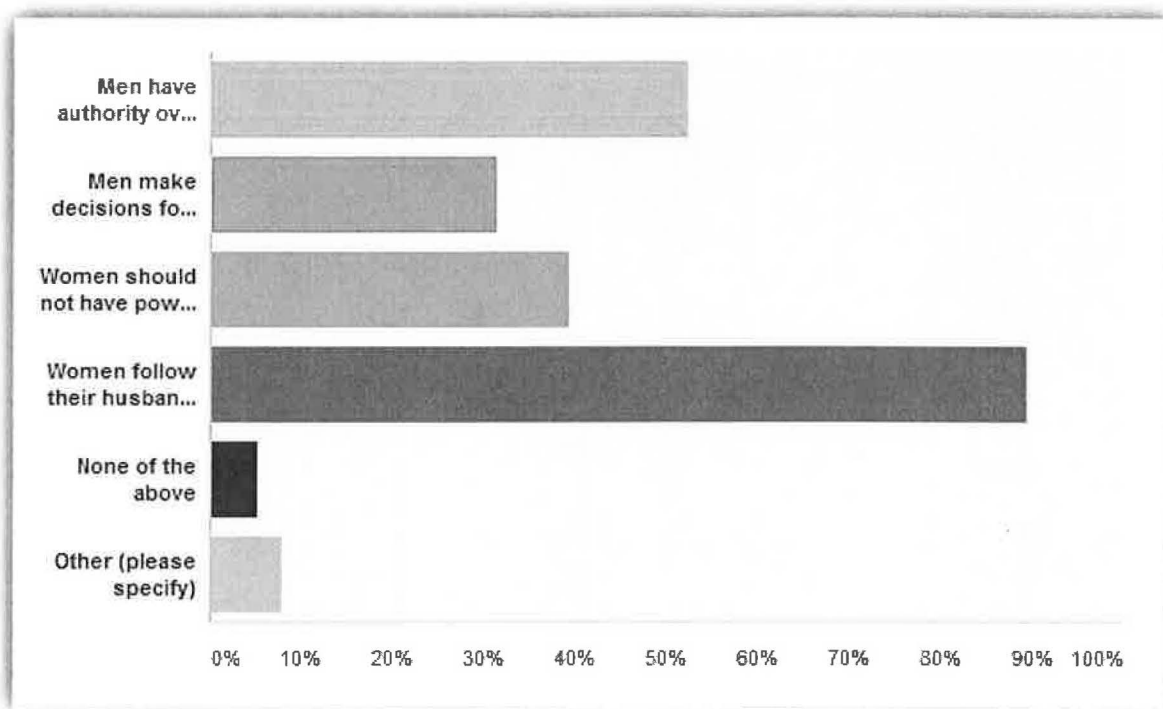


Table 18 Scripture Interpretation: Ephesians 5:22-24: A Woman's Place

The above graph represents men's early interpretation of a woman's place according to Ephesians 5: 22-24. Consistent with the wording of the scripture that instructs women to *submit yourselves to your husbands*, 89.47% interpreted the scripture to literally mean that *women should follow their husband's lead*. Additionally, 52.63% interpreted it to mean that *men should have authority over women*, and 39.47% said it means that *women should not have power over men*.

Analysis and Implications

This scripture is one of the most commonly quoted when giving marriage instruction. It's used as a mediation device, as well, when marital problems are encountered. Many Christians find this scripture to be the way to a happy marriage. Based on some of the other responses, I'm not sure men found this scripture to be sound advice when interpreted literally. Many men, while they might like the idea of submission, have found the application of this scripture to be problematic when taken out of context. According to the responses, many men have found that mutual submission is the key to a healthy relationship. For men who remain entrenched in patriarchy, the first part of the scripture suffices for them. For them also, a literal interpretation is desired to justify their superiority and control. Therein lies the problem with much of scripture – for literal interpretations can *kill* the truth, while spiritual interpretations give *life* to it.

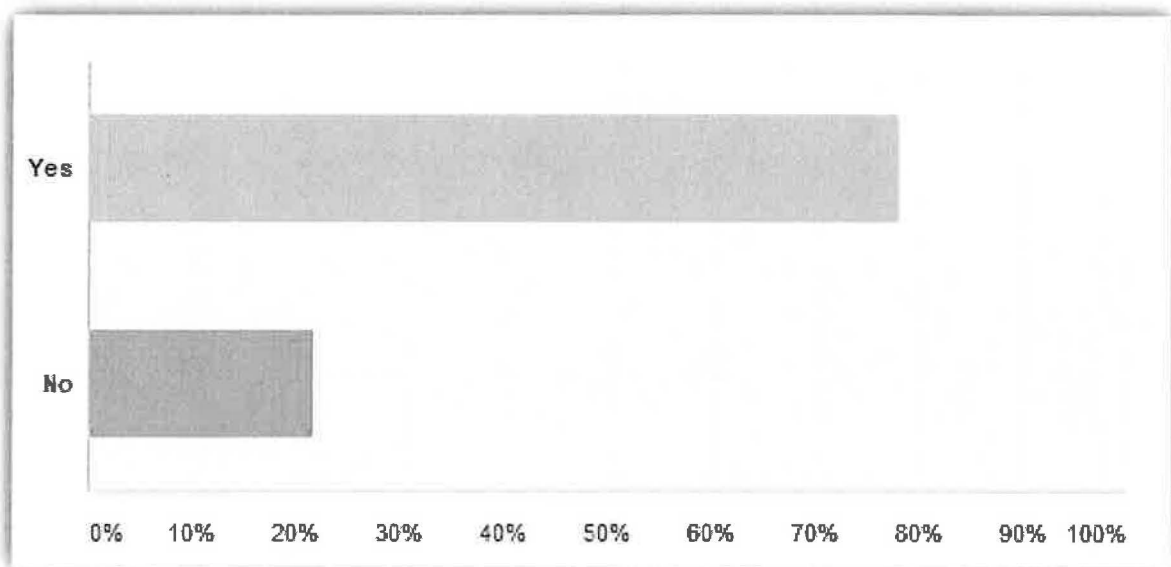


Table 19 Scripture Interpretation: Bible's Interpretation Infallible

The above graph represents men's response when asked if they were taught to interpret the Bible literally, as the infallible word of God. 78.38% said they were taught to interpret the Bible literally and encouraged to believe that it was incapable of errors.

Analysis and Implications

This response puts all other responses in perspective. If the men represent a microcosm of all men, then the work to produce a more sound and inclusive interpretation is vital if we are to answer the spiritual call to create a society with less separation and more unity. My earlier comment about literal interpretations' ability to kill is the one thing that should be taken literally. The literal has and always will incite violence, whether it be abroad, in this country, or right at home.

Final Thoughts On Survey

I realize that I originally asked the respondents to answer all questions based on their early Christian experience. As stated before, many have outgrown the messages that they received at the dawn of their indoctrination. However, I do believe that their answers indicate the magnitude of the conflict and opportunity before us. Even if they believe that they never committed a violent act, the research has shown me that the perceptions such as those set the stage for violence to exist. Their responses also provide me with hope. Whether through trauma, transformative experiences, brokenness, or simply a desire to live and relate more peacefully, these men revealed that change is possible. It's with this inspiration that I will continue to encourage men to rethink and rescript their lives. If they can change thinking, they can change their stories; if they change their stories, they can change their lives.

CHAPTER 5

THE CASE FOR INCLUSION

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:26-27 NIV

Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground." So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them. Genesis 1:26-27 NLT

At first glance, the two scriptures above look identical. A closer examination reveals that they are not the same. The first scripture is taken from the *New International Version* (NIV) of the Bible, while the second scripture is taken from the *New Living Translation* (NLT) of the Bible. If I've learned anything from this project, it's that language is very important to creating perceptions. In mainstream Christianity, the above scripture is considered to be one of those foundational scriptures – the one that explains, particularly to new Christians, how *man* came into being. Notice that I used the word *man* in the previous sentence. There's another scripture found in the book of Genesis that is historically used to explain how *woman* came into being. Before we look at that scripture, allow me to point out the differences with the two scriptures above. In the very first line of the NIV version of the scripture, we read that God said, "Let us make

man in our image...” In the NLT version of the same scripture, we read that God said, “Let us make *human beings* in our image...” Some Christians may consider this difference to be minute and trivial. I don’t. The use of one term or the other can have huge implications, particularly for someone who is not familiar with the Bible and is encouraged to interpret the Bible literally. Such a person is also apt to rely on the teachings and interpretation of a pastor, minister, Sunday School teacher, or anyone they deem more versed in the Bible. Such a person, who might want to have a patriarchal advantage, will likely focus on the term ‘*man*’ while never stopping to consider or even offer an explanation as to why, in same sentence, the term ‘*us*’ appears before the term ‘*man*.’ Who is ‘*us*’? To further make my point about the usage of language, consider the implications of the phrase, “Let us make *human beings*...” The phrase is inclusive in nature and produces a totally different image in the mind of the novice reader. Later in my Christian development, I was encouraged to interpret *man* to *mean* mankind in that scripture. However, this was only after I began to question the literalism of the Bible. Wouldn’t it be interpreted easier if the writer just included the term ‘mankind’ from the very beginning? After all, the NLT version of the Bible was published only 20 years ago. Likewise, versions of the Bible that were intended to offer clarity by the use of modern language are a fairly recent phenomenon. The Living Bible, which is the predecessor to the NLT version, was published 45 years ago, in 1971. Both versions are considered babies when considering the life span of the Bible. The King James Version, which was the Bible that many Christians were first introduced to, was formally authorized in the year 1611 and was considered the standard for English speaking Protestants. The NIV version of the Bible, which the first Genesis scripture is taken

from above, is strikingly similar in language to the King James Version. There are a few other terms and *pronouns* used in the Genesis scriptures that should give the critical reader pause, or at least make one think about the language used. The terms, *our* and *them* are collective pronouns that imply *more than one*. But the most obvious indication of gender inclusion in this creation story is in the last line of the scripture that reads, “...in the image of God he created him; male and female, he created them.” By the way, that scripture in the King James Version of the Bible reads virtually the same way. When interpreting that scripture, one can assume either that God created *man* with male and female qualities, or God literally created males *and* females respectively, while the term “him” denotes *mankind*. Many of these theological questions can proceed from the particular version of the Bible that one read, or the version that one is taught from – in which in case, the interpretation is given by someone else. In the desire to locate inclusive language in the Bible – or to even question why such language is elusive, two questions must be considered. Who is doing the writing and who’s doing the interpreting? Based on these questions, I’ve drawn significant conclusions and implications for future work based on my project. Of the 40 men who participated in the survey, 37 of them responded when asked which version of the Bible that they were raised on. 33 of them cited the King James Version as the Bible of their early Christian experience. Close to 80% of them said that they were taught to interpret that Bible literally. The combination of these facts indicates that many men may still have a narrow interpretation of scripture. However, this offers tremendous opportunities for transformation that is ignited by the use of inclusive language.

The Language and Images of Inclusion

Eric H.F. Law, an ordained Episcopal priest and multicultural consultant, recalls in his book, *Inclusion: Making Room for Grace*, the first time he discovered images of God as a mother. It was during the '70s while attending a Bible study group in college. This occurrence was very significant for him.

The inclusion of the mother image of God allowed me to include the feminine side of myself as part of what God has given me. It allowed me to accept that side of myself that society considered feminine and, to my mind then, not godly. It allowed me to see and perceive the role of women with new eyes. It allowed me to appreciate and support the women's movement of the church. As my boundary was extended to include a different image of God, I became more open to meeting, listening, and learning from others who had a different perception and experience.⁵⁹

Law's experience was not unlike my own when I began to embrace and use language inclusive of a *mother* God. To give gender balance to my reference, I used the term *Father-Mother* God. As a man indoctrinated by patriarchy and masculinity, I did not find it difficult to change my terminology for God – which makes me question the extent of my authentic indoctrination. But many of my male friends did have a problem with referring to God as anything other than *Father*. I knew men and women who shunned those who used the term *mother* when referring to God. And like Eric Law, I found that the change in reference started me on a path to self-love, embracing my whole self, which included traits that I had formerly resisted because of the *feminine* stigma attached to them. My assumption is that many men resist referring to God as *mother* for the same reason, notwithstanding the fact that they had always been taught that God is *Father God* – and Father God alone. Perhaps the deep desire to be a man's man and be likened to the

⁵⁹ Eric H. F. Law, *Inclusion: Making Room for Grace* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000), 72-73.

image of their own fathers, contributes to their resistance of imagining God having to do with anything feminine. And perhaps my loving and respectful relationship with my own mother contributed to the ease on which I referred to God as mother. Nevertheless, the reference to God as Mother or in feminine energies is not new, though some may think it's a New Age phenomenon.

There is evidence that many ancient civilizations embraced divine feminine, language and imagery including Goddess worship. April D. DeConick, in her book *Holy Misogyny* points to the early Syrian Church that retained traditions about the Mother Spirit. Due to the retention of the Syriac dialect in some of the Aramaic Christian traditions, the memory of the female spirit was retained in the culture.

As in Aramaic, the word ruha or "spirit" in Syriac is feminine. Even as late as the fourth century, well-respected Syrian theologians and poets such as Ephrem, Marcarius, and Aphraates still standardly conceive of the Holy Spirit as female.⁶⁰

Merlin Stone, in *When God Was A Woman*, reminds us of the women warriors and the matriarchal nations of Ethiopia and Libya that existed before the birth of Christ. *In part of Libya, where the Goddess Neith was highly esteemed, accounts of the Amazon women still lingered in Roman times.*⁶¹ The warrior women of Libya did indeed revere the Goddess as their major deity and created sanctuaries for Her worship. Stone also reminds us that the concept of the Goddess was vital to Egypt, as well.

In prehistoric Egypt, the Goddess held supremacy in Upper Egypt (the south) as Nekhebt, symbolized as a vulture. The people of Lower Egypt, which includes the northern delta region, worshipped their supreme Goddess as a cobra, using the name Ua Zit (Great Serpent). From about 3000 BC onward the Goddess, known as Nut, Net or Nit, probably derived

⁶⁰ April D. De Conick, *Holy Misogyny: Why the Sex and Gender Conflicts in the Early Church Still Matter* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 21.

⁶¹ Merlin Stone, *When God Was a Woman* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 34.

from Nekhebt, was said to have existed when nothing else had yet been created. She then created all that had come into being. According to Egyptian mythology, it was She who first placed Ra, the sun god, in the sky. Other texts of Egypt tell of the Goddess as Hathor in this role of creator of existence, explaining that She took the form of a serpent at that time.⁶²

Indeed, the presence of a female deity, complete with language and imagery is nothing new. At some point in history, this phenomenon was usurped, suppressed, and replaced with the imagery of a male deity who created the universe and produced man in his own image, created the female as an afterthought, to be obedient to the man. Much of biblical scripture that supports this notion has survived the centuries and still to this day is embedded in the minds of men.

At this point in time, however, I do not suggest that we continue to wage a war of extremes. It's past time to continue imaging God as solely male or solely female. A divine balance is necessary that recognizes the legitimacy of the masculine and feminine nature of the Divine. The only way to do that is to restore that which has been lost or suppressed. We must recognize this as the first step of restoring women to proper standing. The need for inclusive biblical interpretation has never been more in need. In the effort, we must also begin to highlight those biblical scriptures that already produce images of equity and inclusivity. Moreover, we must shine a light on the words and deeds of the One who came to tear down the walls of division, destroy old labels and traditions, and recognize the full presence of God in women.

Inclusion in the Bible

While there are scriptures in the Bible that expressly support inclusion, of utmost importance is for Bible to be read, taught, and embraced with an inclusive spirit. Without

⁶² Ibid

an inclusive spirit, these scriptures will be merely words on a page. Inclusive scriptures are not new to the Bible – they’ve always been there. The fact is that more scriptures have been interpreted through the lens of fear than they have through the lens of an inclusive love. To make the point of the presence of inclusion in the scriptures, consider Galatians 3:28 KJV.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ.

The above scripture is taken from the King James Version of the Bible. It is not part of some new translation, not part of a New Age conspiracy to promote oneness, nor is it in need of a metaphysical interpretation. This scripture has been present in the Bible for centuries. What’s vitally important is how we make meaning of it and live out the scripture in our daily lives.

Consider 1Corinthians 12:12-13 NIV:

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

The scripture has significant implications for the equal standing of all men and women - Christian men and women specifically. For those who consider themselves to be Christians, Christ is the point at which we recognize the full presence of God in each other, regardless of labels such as race, ethnicity, or gender. Inclusively interpreted, though we may show up on this planet as men and women respectively, we each are equally vital to the whole.

And to end with the scripture we started with, consider again Genesis 1:27 NLT.

So God created human beings in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.

These three scriptures suggest no specific roles for men or women in God's kingdom. They do not imply superiority or inferiority, nor do they relegate anyone to the status of *other*. Adherence to the scriptures will diminish the oppression and violence that women incur from men who believe the world is theirs. In the new world, religious rules, dogma, and indoctrination take a backseat to the transformative power of Christ.

Jesus as Feminist and Christ Consciousness

Jesus' words and actions toward women in the scriptures are nothing short of revolutionary. Jesus always defied the social norms of his time. Sarah Bessey, author of *Jesus Feminist: An Invitation To Revisit The Bible's View of Women*, reminds us that whether it was the Samaritan woman at the well, the prostitute, adulteress, or mentally ill, he never spoke to women through the lens of superiority or patriarchy. When the woman with the issue of blood reached out to touch the hem of his garment, he praised her faith and healed her. When the woman caught in adultery faced stoning, he protected her and invited her into glory of grace and dismissed her accusers by writing in the sand. In a time when a woman's word was worthless, Mary Magdalene was the first witness Christ's resurrection thereby becoming the first preacher of the resurrection.

We can miss the crazy beauty of it because of the lack of fanfare in Scripture. Women were simply there, part of the revolution of love, sometime unnamed, sometimes in the background, sometime the receiver, sometimes the giver – just like every other man in Scripture, to be engaged on their own merit in the midst of their own story.

Jesus thinks women are people, too.⁶³

The words and deeds of Jesus are supposed to be the Christian's example. We share in the Christ consciousness that spawned Jesus' actions. If we, as men, will allow God to

⁶³ Sarah Bessey, *Jesus Feminist: An Invitation to Revisit the Bible's View of Women* (New York: Howard Books, A Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2013), 22.

free us of the patriarchal mind, we can then adopt the Christ mind – where conflict and violence related to duality is non-existent. Only then will we stop letting our masculinity eclipse our humanity.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSIONS

When I was first given the vision for this Demonstration Project, I had no idea of what a huge undertaking it was. Initially, the only thing I knew was that I had a strong desire to be a better man, a more loving and compassionate husband, and an awareness of myself as a whole being, complete with a balance of masculine and feminine energy. It was my intention to allow this balance to translate into loving action that would continually contribute to a healthy relationship with my wife, my world, and all other relationships. The initial inspiration came when I critically viewed some images of women that, quite honestly, I had been seeing all of my adult life. It dawned on me, in that moment, that I had always viewed these images through the lens of my maleness. I stopped to reflect on how these provocative images may have skewed my view of women and the serious issues that affect them. Having no idea of the concepts and effects of patriarchy and hyper-masculinity, I instinctively knew that my relationships with women had been clouded by this lens. This awareness inspired me to consider that my life had always been an exercise in Conflict Transformation, and willingly accepted any and all work that would bring *clarity* to my past, *presence* to my *Now*, and great *anticipation* for my future. As a minister, I was and am passionately committed to offer this work to other men and invite them to see that we act out the narratives that are imposed upon us. My work is to inspire them to see that we have the power to redefine those narratives

with the intent on living freely and peacefully while reducing conflict, tension, and violence in ourselves and in our relationships.

Creating and participating in this Demonstration Project has changed my life, to say the least. To experience the growth that I have, and to see the revelations that other men experience is highly gratifying and nothing short of amazing. While in Detroit recently, I ran into two men who were present at the initial workshop I did with the Men of Transforming Love Community. They both expressed sincere gratitude for the time we spent together in 2014. One of them gave me a strong embrace, looked in my eyes, and just said, “Thank you!” As for me, my wife rarely misses the opportunity to tell me how I’ve grown in her eyes. Occurrences such as these mean everything. I could judge the success of this project based on those two happenings alone. Further evidence of the project’s success, however, is determined by how well the project adhered to the original purposes in which it was intended.

The criteria I used for judging the project’s success is whether or not I satisfied my original Research questions. My feeling is that I satisfied **Research Question #1** by identifying *some of the traditional theological and biblical roots for patriarchal images of God*. **Research Question #2** inquired about *how relationships with women, grounded in domination-subordination, translate into intimate partner violence*. While my research uncovered how these types of relationships contribute to all manners of violence perpetrated on women, my interactions with the participants did not address intimate partner violence specifically, but did indeed uncover how other forms of violence are perpetrated against women. Most of all, my time with the participants certainly revealed how mindsets, imagery, and language based on the principles of inferiority/superiority,

can set the stage or create an environment where intimate partner violence can flourish. The intent of **Research Question #3** was to *identify an educational process that will counter-socialize men in an effort to reduce violence against women*. Although I didn't have the opportunity to complete an entire re-socialization experience with the men, I do believe that the course of my work inspired me to identify a process that will indeed counter-socialize men. The process begins as men become aware of existing narratives and the cultural, religious, and environmental roots of their existence. A huge part of the process comes in understanding how ideas of masculinity, based in dominance and superiority, have contributed to the conflict and tension in men's lives. Men can then see how unhealthy narratives contribute to the ongoing presence of patriarchy in society. As the process continues, men recognize the external influence of problematic narratives in their lives and can then re-script their narratives - supported by the adoption of inclusive thinking, language, and imagery that restores women to their original standing as purposed by God. I feel confident that I satisfied this requirement that this question posed.

My one criticism is found in my sincere desire to walk with men through every phase of the process that will assist them in creating the new narratives to enliven and sustain the rest of their lives. With this said, my wish is that I would've worked with just one group of men from the beginning to the end of this project. A lack of financial and capital resources caused me to abandon my original plan to keep my work focused on the Men of TLC in Detroit, MI. In doing so, I feel like I abandoned them – thereby stunting any growth that they experienced during our first two workshops. The work of recovery and transformation requires a consistent presence - a presence that must be the hallmark

of action research. While I know that no moment with these men was wasted, my follow-through with them should've been better. Overall, I am proud of the accomplishments that we had together. Though my strategies had to constantly be adjusted, I am satisfied with the awareness brought to the participants. I had originally planned to have a culminating event where the men would have an opportunity to share their growth with the women in their lives and in the community. Time did not permit for this to take place. I found that significant time must be taken for men to uncover, recover, and discover a new way of being. In the future, more time will be allotted for this to take place.

This Demonstration Project created many more opportunities for transformation in other areas. The project helped me to realize that it's not only men who succumb to the violence inspired by patriarchal images, but women as well. This creates opportunities to explore the violence that women inflict upon one another due to their acceptance of patriarchal standards. As a passionate participant in the cause of social justice, the project has also inspired me to explore the relationship between patriarchy and homophobia in men. Due to discoveries made during this project, it is my belief that hyper-masculinity ignites the violence that men inflict on other same gender-loving men. This project has given birth to tremendous opportunities to increase awareness and justice while decreasing the violence that fear and ignorance engenders. At this point in history, nothing is more important.

I am honored to be part of the solution.

PATRIARCHAL IMAGES OF GOD AND VIOLENCE TOWARDS WOMEN

VOLUME II

By

SPENCER A. MURRAY

APPENDICES

Appendix A
Demonstration Project Proposal

PATRIARCHAL IMAGES OF GOD AND VIOLENCE TOWARDS WOMEN

By

SPENCER ALEXANDER MURRAY

A DEMONSTRATION PROJECT PROPOSAL

New York Theological Seminary

2014

Challenge Statement

As a Christian minister for 20 years, I am aware of how traditional Christian theology can socialize men into gender roles that support the domination of women in church and society. Biblical texts are often interpreted as the basis for relationships of domination-subordination between men and women. This project guides men through a transformational process for deconstructing the power of such texts, and constructing new narratives that foster more equitable relationships with the women in their lives.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING

While the primary setting of my ministry is Transforming Love Community, a trans-denominational spiritual community located in Detroit, MI, the crux of my ministry takes place beyond the walls of the church, in the communities in which I live and serve. The intent of my ministry is to respond to the needs of humanity, whether within or outside the context of a traditional congregation. For the purposes of this project, however, Transforming Love Community will act as the physical setting in which the project takes place. A small group of men, some of whom are members of Transforming Love Community, will be the participants in the project.

Most people who arrive at TLC have come from backgrounds in which they have experienced a degree of guilt or shame associated with social, psychological, or spiritual trauma. Therefore, it is the expressed intent of Transforming Love Community to display love, concern, and compassion to all those who walk through the door. Within the walls of TLC, it is difficult to distinguish between the love that is shared between the members themselves, and the love that is shared with a first-time visitor. This display of love, within a non-judgmental environment, nurtures receptivity to transformational experiences.

The unique vocation of Transforming Love Community (TLC) is to create an environment, within the congregation as well as in the outer community, where transformation can take place – more specifically - *where love transforms lives*. The

church is intentional in creating programs, events, and the environment in which people are encouraged to look deeply within themselves as a precursor to radical change. Everyone who comes in contact with Transforming Love Community is encouraged to embrace this philosophy of introspection and renewal. Through the following Mission Statement, individuals are encouraged to allow the spirit within them to lead to transformation:

We are here to create an environment where you can experience the Presence of God. We are convinced that developing a relationship with the Christ within you will afford you a life of health, happiness, peace and abundance. We are here to teach the truth principles as espoused by our Master Teacher, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. We believe that the Spirit within you will bring you into all truth and knowledge.

The mission statement reveals the ways in which TLC departs from traditional teachings and embraces a New Thought philosophy, which assumes that God's divinity dwells within each person, and people are spiritual beings. Through this philosophy, loving one another unconditionally becomes the highest principle through which we teach and heal one another. This means that the care, support, and compassion that is shown at TLC is intended to facilitate a shift from an old way of thinking to a new reality based on the mind of Christ. The transformation is thus based upon the principles of unconditional self-love, non-judgment, forgiveness, and a willingness to create new life experiences through a new way of thinking.

The mission of Transforming Love Community thus provides the ideal foundation upon which to ground my project. The focus group will consist of 12-15 men, many of whom are members or friends of Transforming Love Community. The men chosen to participate in the project have varying degrees of awareness as it relates to transformational principles, whether gained from Transforming Love Community or from

the recovery principles that they were previously exposed to, such as responsibility, respect, hope, and empowerment. It is expected that these men will be amenable to efforts to raise their awareness regarding issues that affect the stories of their lives. By participating in this project, the men will become more conscious of how traditional Christian language, biblical interpretation, and socialization have contributed to a culture of violence towards women. The men will be educated about how inherited ideas of power over, and control of, women contribute to violent relationships with women, and how their own relationships with women can be reflective of this violence. It is further expected that as a result of participating in this project, these men's relationships with women, particularly those that are intimate in nature, will be enhanced and characterized by increased understanding, respect, and collaboration. Using insights from narrative mediation theory, men and women will share in a process that allows them to participate in the creation of renewed relationships that reduce violence and increase gender justice.

Narrative mediation fits the aims and purposes of the project because it emphasizes the way we construct our understanding of relationships on the basis of personal and cultural narratives. Participants will be invited to explore how the narratives of their lives have affirmed male dominance while, simultaneously, purporting the inferiority of females. Specifically, the men will recognize how Christian teachings have contributed to narratives that have been made their relationships with women conflictual, abusive, and/or violent. Likewise, exploration of cultural narratives will further reveal how the men have participated or been complicit in systems that are disempowering and violent towards women. In the end, participants will be enabled to deconstruct these dominating narratives and create alternative narratives that are characterized by a

significant shift in thought. The new narratives will be based on alternative images of men and women that foster relationships built on respect, equality, and non-violence. Overall, it is my assertion that through the use of a narrative mediation methodology, old narratives of gender relations, grounded in traditional Christian theology and biblical interpretation, will be replaced with new frameworks that lead to healthy, respectful, and equitable relations between men and women.

A qualitative research method will be used to highlight the participants' behaviors and explore the reasons that govern their behaviors. In doing so, I'll be looking for the correlation between how the men interpret biblical texts, and use those interpretations to justify domination-subordination relationships with women. Narrative Mediation, as put forth by John Winslade and Gerald Monk in *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution* will provide the framework for analysis of the narratives in the participants' lives. Also, as a methodology for doing conflict transformation, narrative mediation provides the foundation from which a change in narratives can take place.

The field of psychology will inform the research by providing a basis from which to understand the mental functions and behaviors of the participants. As stated by Jennie S Knight, "Recognition of the psychological formation of images is a crucial step in helping people move beyond the limitations that those images place on their self-images, relationships with others, and relationship with the Divine."¹ Causal and correlational relationships will emerge to show how the men's interpretations and perceptions affect their interpersonal relationships. Sociology will provide the means by which to study the origins of the participants' social behavior. Specifically, religion will be explored as the

¹ Jennie S. Knight, *Feminist Mysticism and Images of God: A Practical Theology* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2011), 15.

social structure that has informed the thoughts and behaviors of men. The field of education will shed light on the process by which formative experiences have affected the way the men think, feel, and act. The project will uncover how certain teachings have been transferred from one generation to the next to maintain power structures that exist today. In doing so, research will reveal Paulo Freire's "banking" concept of education. According to Freire, "Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor."²

² Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 53.

CHAPTER 2

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGE

As a Christian minister for 20 years, I am aware of how traditional Christian theology can socialize men into gender roles that support the domination of women in church and society. Biblical texts are often interpreted as the basis for relationships of domination-subordination between men and women. This project guides men through a transformational process for deconstructing the power of such texts, and constructing new narratives that foster more equitable relationships with the women in their lives.

In her book, *Feminine Mysticism and Images of God*, Jennie S. Knight maintains that,

We live out of the images that inform us. Images of the divine, other people and one's self are profoundly interrelated within each person's imagination. They affect every relationship, including with the divine. For this reason it is crucial that we examine the images that shape our lives.³

The above quote confirms the notion that images can dictate the way in which we relate to another person. The level of importance we attach to an image is often dictated by how that image is originally presented. Ideas of superiority and inferiority can be the result of years of embedded imaging. The proliferation of unequal power that emerges out of these ideas often operates within systems that maintain the power of those who control the images. Traditional Christian teaching and biblical interpretation lie at the heart of this issue. Scriptures found in Genesis 2:21-23, Genesis 3:12-16, I Corinthians 11:7-10, and Ephesians 5:22-24, to name a few, present not only images of women's origins, but also to the place women take among men. These scriptures are frequently referred to by men in and outside of the church to justify their use of power over women.

³ Knight, *Feminist Mysticism*, 2.

Consider the following statement by Rev Fritz Fritshel, Assisting Pastor of the Lutheran Church of Honolulu:

For me, the key to understanding the notion of violence lies in the misuse of power. It really is a power issue and, theologically, that's where I think we've gone astray. For a great length of time the whole Christian church has been operating with a sense of power that has been detrimental to females, by uplifting or upholding the patriarchal form of God's power.⁴

The above statement gives an indication of the urgency of the moment. To even begin the task of gender reconciliation, there must be a critical acknowledgment of how Christian teachings and biblical interpretations have contributed to an environment that is oppressive to women. The tendency to objectify or oppress another is often associated with efforts to dehumanize them. According to Paulo Freire, dehumanization is not a given destiny but the result of an unjust order that engenders violence in the oppressors, which in turn dehumanizes the oppressed.⁵ Men's efforts to minimize the rights, personhood, and even the very humanity of women, can be seen as a violent act.

From a conflict transformation perspective, this issue is ripe with tensions that evolve out of narratives adopted from years of conditioning. It also presents profound opportunities to reinterpret longstanding images through sound transformative practices. To bypass egalitarian interpretations of scripture, in sole favor of interpretations dominated by patriarchal and misogynistic images, serves to diminish the very personhood of females. Consequently, tensions arise as women continue to affirm their divine right to exist on a plane equal to men. Tensions are exacerbated by men who refuse to acknowledge divine personhood of women and continue to resist efforts that

⁴ Al Miles, *Domestic Violence: What Every Pastor Needs to Know*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 153.

⁵ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 26.

place them in equal status with men. To even imply dual gender-images of God is often seen as blasphemous in society that is built on male domination. To do so would be to threaten the very system that keeps men in power. The destruction of that system would mean to destroy the structures that have historically oppressed women. Conversely, it would also promote the building of new structures that are affirming towards women. I am proposing that, through a narrative mediation framework, a fundamental reimagining of the divine can emerge through the reinterpretation of scriptures that have historically been harmful to women. In doing so, a key component will be added to the creation of a society where women are seen to be as equally relevant as men in our spiritual formations.

In the larger context, the issue of violence against women continues to permeate many levels of society. Whether in the private homes of men and women, the public arena of business or government, the popular media, or the religious and educational institutions, women are still subjugated to the oppression dictated by men who believe they have the inherent right to do so. This presents a huge ethical dilemma. In a country that prides itself on the premise of liberty and justice for all, the opposite is often true when analyzing the disproportionate status of women. The dilemma is further highlighted by the fact that an estimated 1.3 million women are victims of physical assault by an intimate partner each year.⁶ This fact alone is hardly representative of a society that claims to be just and protective of women. While many men would deny personal culpability in producing such a climate, they continue, oftentimes unconsciously, to

⁶ US Department of Health and Human Services, *Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States* (Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Centers for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003), <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/ipvbook-a.pdf> (accessed March 7, 2014).

participate in a system that is violent towards women. This system, along with other systems of oppression, is founded on a perceived privilege that is assumed by the oppressor – a privilege that is, many times, associated with an image and perception of a God provided by biblical interpretation.

Oppressive systems often consist of individual people who acquiesce to a collective consciousness. Consequently, in the attempt to change the system, the people within that system must be changed first. This project is designed to raise men's awareness of the system that marginalizes women and explore the genesis of its creation. These same men will be able to identify ways in which they have contributed to this system and/or perpetrated violence against women in their lives. The objective is for these men to experience a transformation that will comprehensively change the way they think, act, and behave towards women. The means by which this change is facilitated is grounded in biblical reinterpretation and reimagining of God. It is my assertion that healthier and more prosperous relationships will result from recognizing the Divine in each other. In the effort to spread this message, the objective is to produce a conscious-raising process that can be reproduced and presented to as many men as possible. This intended transformation has profound global, societal, communal, and individual implications. A society that strives towards the ideals of freedom, justice, and equality, cannot afford to miss the opportunities to transform itself into its highest vision. Our individual and collective beliefs, aspirations, ideals, humanity are at stake.

My task is to show the men in the focus group how their lives, relationships, and interactions with women will be significantly enhanced by the transformative processes of this project. I anticipate that many of the men will initially respond with denial about

how years of socialization have embedded images of gender oppression. I do believe, however, that the men will emerge with a reinterpretation characterized by a more inclusive image of God, and recognition of how that image can inspire them to live out newly formed narratives that are honorable and respectful toward women.

There are more than enough adequate resources to address this Challenge. While there is an abundance of external resources that can be used for the project, the internal resources must come from men who are willing to uncover the roots of the existing narratives that exists in their internal landscape, recover by the exploration of alternative narratives, and discover a new way of being based on a new way of seeing women.

Many resources also exist within the Site Team. The Site Team consists of members who have either experienced, or been witnesses to the victimization of a system that has marginalized and objectified them or their loved ones. Consequently, they have a personal investment in the merits of this project. Their contributions to the spirit of this project are invaluable. For many on the site team, their current positions in life, such as Pastor of non-denominational church or Director of Instructional Equity for a large school system, put them in direct contact with a system that is a glaring reflection of inequities based on gender. The Site Team is contributing resources to the project, such as websites, readings, and book titles that enlarge my study of the subject. They are also providing commentary on the competencies I wish to enhance during the project. A selected Site Team member is providing academic guidance as I proceed with the writing and organization of the project. I anticipate increased interest as this project proceeds.

CHAPTER 3

PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION

Goal 1 –Develop awareness among men of the biblical and theological influences that have contributed toward their image of God, perception of women, and associated gender roles.

Strategy 1: Identify 15-20 men who have had some exposure to religion during their lifetime as well as prior or current relationships with women. I, along with the Assistant Pastor of Transforming Love Community will hand-pick the men based off a combination of factors, including current or prior known conflicts with women and an expressed desire to seek change in their lives. Create and administer a survey among these men in which they convey their image of God and the sources of that imaging. The survey will invite men to comment on the origins and status of woman based on their interpretation of Genesis 2: 21-23, Genesis 3:12-16, I Corinthians 11:7-10, and Ephesians 5: 22-24. The survey will elicit additional teachings and experiences that have contributed to their image and perception of women, and how these images impact their current interactions with women. Men will also identify alternative images of God that might have been provided to them.

Strategy 2: Analyze the results of the survey in light of the biblical and theological research on the patriarchal, misogynistic, and non-egalitarian images of God, including feminist writings that speak to the social, spiritual, psychological, and physical impact of the exclusive use of this language, imagery, and biblical interpretation.

Strategy 3: Invite the men surveyed to a Face-to-Face engagement to dialogue about survey results and further explore the origins of their God imagery and associated gender assumptions. A safe and transparent space will be created at Transforming

Love Community that is non-judgmental and confidential. The Opening Circle technique, taken from *The Little Book of Cool Tools for Hot Topics*, will be used to encourage dialogue. Upon entering the Open Circle, the men will be asked to randomly choose a folded piece of paper containing a scripture passage that suggests images of God and/or women. After the introductions and the given objectives, each man will be invited to read his scripture and discuss the images suggested by that scripture. Each participant will offer his perspective on the scripture, and the group will be encouraged to comment and engage in open dialogue as it relates to images suggested by each scripture. In closing, men will express how the scriptures continue to represent gender roles, images, and expectations today.

Evaluation of Goal 1: Of the men identified and surveyed, 90% of the men will have responded and shown further interest in the exploration and impact of their scriptural interpretations. Ninety percent of the men surveyed will attend the Open Circle with 100% participation in the dialogue. By means of an ending survey, 75% of the men will report an increased awareness of how biblical and theological and religious influences have contributed to their imagery of God and associated gender roles.

Goal 2- Expand participants' understanding of violence and violence towards women as a consequence of domination-subordination relationships.

Strategy 1: Show an excerpt of the movie, *What's Love Got To Do With It?* Have participants identify all instances of violence in the movie clip, as well as why they think it occurred. Review the definition and the origins of the word *violence* as well as a relationship between religion and violence. Use a standard dictionary and an etymology dictionary to expand the meaning of *violence*. Excerpts from Robert McAfee Brown's book, *Religion and Violence* will also be used to draw on the historical relationship between religion and violence. Participants will brainstorm and compile a list of actions and behaviors that constitute violence. The men will then view and discuss the "Power and Control Wheel," developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, as well as definitions of *intimate*

partner violence, to further expand their awareness of the many facets of violence. The “Power and Control Wheel” is a graphic representation of the common abusive behaviors and tactics used against women⁷.

Strategy 2: Review, analyze, and discuss selected writings of early Christian theologians that reflect hostile attitudes toward women, and stories from the Bible that depict violence perpetrated against women. Participants will analyze stories from the Bible to determine how violence is present in the experiences of women in the text. Men will be divided into 4 small groups and given one biblical story and one early writing each. Each group will have 20-30 minutes to read and discuss the stories and writings, and determine how violence was present in the writings. After 30 minutes, the larger group will reconvene to allow the smaller groups to report their findings.

Strategy 3: As a group, participants will use the “Power and Control Wheel” to categorize the acts of violence from the previous exercise. A visual model of the “Power and Control Wheel” will be displayed in the room. Respondents will be invited to the front of the room to categorize actions in the appropriate place on the Wheel.

Evaluation of Goal 2: Seventy-five percent of the participants will display increased knowledge of actions and behaviors that constitute violence. Each participant will be given an exercise consisting of two case studies in which they are required to identify occurrences of violence within each scenario. Seventy-five percent of the participants will identify violent episodes toward women occurring in each scenario.

⁷ Duluth Model, “Wheel Gallery,” www.theduluthmodel.org/training/wheels.html (accessed March 5, 2014).

Goal 3 –Men will recognize how cultural, societal and religious imagery contributes to the current culture of violence towards women. Participants will identify and describe how they have explicitly participated in, or how they have been complicit in, the creation of that culture.

Strategy 1: Utilize videos, art, music, magazines, popular and news media, as well as biblical text, to expose men to the various ways in which women are objectified and marginalized. Participants will discuss the perceptions and images that these mediums display, while using biblical text as a backdrop in order to connect traditional images to current images.

Strategy 2: In a group setting, participants will be asked to identify specific instances in which they were perpetrators of violence against women in their lives or complicit in the maintenance of a culture that is violent towards women. Each participant will give voice as to the motive behind the implicit or complicit act of violence.

Strategy 3: Each participant will be asked to write a letter of acknowledgment to a woman of their choosing expressing his awareness of his implicit or complicit violent behavior. Participants will be encouraged to express all feelings that can aid in reconciliation including remorse and request for forgiveness. The men will read their letter to a partner before reconvening to the larger group. Volunteers will be asked to read their letter to the group.

Evaluation of Goal 3: Seventy percent of participating males will have been able to recognize how they have contributed to or supported violence against women. All of the participants will write letters to a woman currently or previously in their lives. Sixty-five percent of those men will express a need for reconciliation for past behaviors or actions. At least 50% of the participants will read their letter in front of the larger group.

Goal 4- Men will display an understanding of how alternative biblical interpretation and imagery can assist them to live out new narratives characterized by relationships with women that are egalitarian in nature.

Strategy 1: Men will be presented with scriptural passages that reflect alternative images of female origins and gender relations. Participants will read and offer their interpretation of Genesis 1:27-28, Matthew 19:4-6, and Galatians 3:26-29 as well as other scriptural passages from the book of Luke that depict Jesus' interaction with women.

Strategy 2: Men will be presented with images from news and popular media, as well as writings from Frederick Douglass and other Christian writers that speak to the inherent political, social, and divine equal rights of women. Men will discuss the images and writings in small groups, while juxtaposing them with prior images. Participants will reconvene in the larger group to dialogue about findings.

Strategy 3: Participants will create role plays based on scenarios experienced in their lives. Men will be split up into two groups to discuss prior encounters they've had with women in which they exercised male privilege for means of power and control. Based on the discussions, men will create two role plays consisting of the same scenario. One role play will depict a scenario in which their view of women is based on domination-subordination. Scenario #2 will depict a renewed awareness of the inherent equality of women. Each group will have a narrator to introduce and explain the scenario while pointing out the specific interactions with women that are reflective of their heightened awareness of the personhood of women

Evaluation of Goal 4: Seventy percent of men will report a higher awareness of how women are treated based on the images and teachings presented to them. Role plays will reflect an understanding of the actions and behaviors that affirm women while reducing violence.

Goal 5 -Provide a forum for men that allows participants to share their newfound knowledge and growth with the women in their lives as well as the women of Transforming Love Community.

Strategy 1: Participants will choose a method or genre (song, rap, dance, role play, spoken word) in which to share with women what they've learned as well as their personal growth with the subject matter.

Strategy 2: Participants will create an invitation for each participant to invite 3 women that they choose to be present, along with the women of Transforming Love Community.

Strategy 3: The spiritual leader of Transforming Love Community will welcome guests to the presentation. I will open by introducing the project, its purposes and my motivation for embarking on the topic. I will introduce the participants in the project. Two participants will narrate a slideshow of pictures taken during the sessions. A short video by Jackson Katz, *Violence Against Women-It's a Men's Issue*, will be shown as preparation for the upcoming presentations to guests. A selected participant will introduce each presentation. After the presentations, guests will have an opportunity to make comments or ask questions of me or the participants. The event will conclude with closing comments from the Spiritual Leader of Transforming Love Community

Evaluation of Goal 5: Seventy-five percent of the participants will make presentations that portray a progression in thought as it relates to their interpretations of language and imagery and how that language and imagery contributes to their view and treatment of women.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What are some of the traditional theological and biblical roots for patriarchal images of God?

- How have patriarchal images of God translated into misogynistic views of women in the church, home, and society?
- To what degree has the Bible contributed to men's idea of masculinity?
- In what ways does a patriarchal interpretation of scriptures create defined gender roles for men and women?
- To what degree does traditional biblical language contribute to current perceptions of women?
- How do current religious practices reflect the misogynistic view of early Christian theologians?
- To what degree have men's relational experiences with women been reflective of patriarchal interpretation of the Bible and relationships built on domination-subordination?
- How have additional early teachings impacted men's attitude, behavior, and actions toward women?

How do relationships with women, grounded in domination-subordination, translate into intimate partner violence?

- What behaviors and actions are characteristic of domination-subordination relationships?
- In what ways is violence present in the experiences of women in the Bible?
- How is biblical language inherently violent towards women?

- How does the Bible reflect a male-dominated culture that is hostile towards women?
- How has biblical language contributed to ideas of masculinity for men?
- How have traditional theological influences caused men to enter into conflict stories with women?
- How do the patriarchal interpretations of scripture have political, social, cultural, and economic implications for women?
- How do the current images of women through popular media (music, art, videos) contribute to a culture of violence towards women?
- What current role are men playing in the implicit or explicit acts of violence toward women?
- In what ways is the silence of men complicit in the sustainment of a culture that is violent towards women?
- What role do patriarchal interpretations of the Bible play in the political arena?
- What role does violence play in gender-based inequities in positions of power within the church?

What educational process will counter-socialize men in an effort to reduce violence against women?

- How can narrative mediation theory contribute to a reimagining of God that is gender inclusive?
- What passages in the Bible offer a way of viewing women that is respectful, honorable, and equitable?
- How can a reinterpretation of scripture reduce tensions between men and women in church, at home, and in the state?
- As a result of narrative mediation, how can men begin to live out new narratives with women that are not based on power and control?

- In what ways do scriptures of the New Testament suggest an alternative view of the status of women and how can these scriptures lay the foundation for narratives that reduce violence towards women?
- How can the gender-inclusive interpretation of scripture contribute to a redefining of masculinity for men?
- How can the redefining of masculinity, among men, contribute to a diminished need for power and control over women?
- How can the process of deconstructing patriarchal power structures contribute to feelings of empowerment and personhood for women?

CHAPTER 5 EVALUATION PROCESS

Method of Evaluation for Goal 1:

Ninety percent of the men identified and surveyed will respond and express an interest in exploring the biblical, educational, and societal influences on their perceptions and interactions with women. The candidate and the Site Team will review the surveys and categorize them according to the responses given. Surveys will be categorized according to age, ethnicity, level of education, early family demographics, and religious denomination that respondent identifies with. The Site Team and candidate will look for any relationships between the respondent's view of women and demographic information given. The candidate will analyze the results in light of the available research on the religious, educational, and societal contributions to power and control rooted in patriarchal imagery.

Ninety percent of the men will participate in an Open Circle dialogue for the purpose of reviewing the results of the survey and engaging in further conversations about the biblical interpretations as it relates to women. Participants will discuss other formative experiences that have contributed to their perceptions of women. Through an informal observation method, the candidate will observe that 65% of the participants report that biblical teachings and interpretations, reinforced by social and cultural norms, have impacted their relationships with women by assuming a domination-subordination narrative.

Method of Evaluation for Goal 2:

Informal observations and responses will show that 90% of the participants were able to identify acts of violence in the excerpts from *What's Love Got To Do With It*. Of the 90% responding, 75% will identify only the physical acts of violence occurring in the excerpts. After a review of *intimate partner violence* and the "Power and Control Wheel," informal responses will show that less than 30% of the men were able to recognize the actions and behaviors of the "Power and Control Wheel" as being violent. Observation will reveal that 100% of the men are contributing to the small group dialogue about the writings of early Christian theologians and the stories from the Bible.

Through the small group exercise, verbal responses will be evaluated to ensure that at least 75% of the participants were able to successfully identify the presence of gender violence in the text, as well as the writings of early Christian theologians. Seventy-five percent of participants will also correctly categorize violent behaviors found in the biblical text and writings into the appropriate category on the "Power and Control Wheel." The candidate will formally evaluate case study responses to ensure that at least 75% of the participants were able to identify acts of violence in real-life scenarios provided to them.

Method of Evaluation for Goal 3:

Seventy-five percent of the participants will recognize and acknowledge, in a group setting, how they have explicitly contributed to violence against women, or how they have been complicit through silence. Sixty-five percent of the men writing letters will express, through their writing, a readiness to take responsibility for past or current actions, a need for reconciliation, and readiness to embrace a new narrative in their

relationships with women. At least 50% will of those expressing a willingness to make a shift will read their letters in front of the larger group.

Method of Evaluation for Goal 4:

Seventy-five percent of the participants will be able to recognize and verbalize the distinction between oppressive and liberating images of women and how they impact their relationships with women. The candidate will evaluate the role plays to determine their effectiveness in reflecting a new understanding of the humanity and personhood of women, as well as display examples of how new narratives can be lived out that affirm women and reduce violence.

Method and Evaluation for Goal 5:

Seventy-five percent of the participants will make presentations that portray a progression in thought as it relates to their biblical interpretations, gender roles and expectations, and violence. Presentations will reflect how renewed interpretations contribute to relationships with women that are respectful, affirming, and equitable.

CHAPTER 6

MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES

Religious Educator

Goal 1: Candidate will display courage while increasing the capacity to challenge the hearer to explore uncharted terrain of the spirit for their continued growth; and display transparency in the process of eliciting responses and experiences from the hearer.

Strategy 1: Candidate will share and relate personal experiences to the spiritual concepts taught. The candidate will take the lead in going to the place where participants are encouraged to go. The candidate will reveal his own religious journey and the changing narratives that accompanied it.

Strategy 2: The candidate will make inquiries of each participant by asking questions that encourage them to delve deeper into their own consciousness regarding the roots of their socialization. This will be accomplished by the constant building of trust and confidence by the candidate. The building of a safe, non-judgmental space will encourage participants to engage in the transparent sharing of their experiences and inner thoughts.

Evaluation: Seventy-five percent of the men will share openly regarding their experiences with religion and relationships with women. Participants will feel safe to communicate revelations that they were previously unaware of and relate it to the spiritual concept discussed.

Spiritual Leader

Goal 1: The candidate will maintain a personal spiritual practice in order to show up with spiritual presence and power in the community in which I work. Through

the practice of spiritual presence, the candidate will create a space where the community of participants can access and practice that presence for themselves.

Strategy 1: Candidate will embark upon and maintain a practice of meditation and other mindful practices on a regular basis to center and still myself preceding my interaction with the community. Prayers, meditations, yoga, as well as daily readings and affirmations will help to ensure that I am spiritually centered as a leader encouraging spiritual transformation.

Strategy 2: Candidate will open each workshop session with prayer, meditation, and breathing exercises in order to usher in the presence of the Spirit and center the participants as they prepare to engage in transformative activities.

Evaluation: Participants will be able to hear, understand, and respond to the spiritual direction the candidate provides. Informal observations and responses of participants will display a spiritual presence characterized by thoughtfulness, transparency, and honesty.

Counselor

Goal: Candidate will exhibit patience while walking with others along their spiritual journey, and recognize the limitations of counseling at moments of clarity for the participants.

Strategy 1: Read and enhance my knowledge regarding human psychological development in an effort to understand the process of learning and allow others to travel the spiritual journey at their own pace.

Strategy 2: Candidate will answer questions that have been asked, while guiding hearers to the threshold of their own understanding. The candidate will resist the temptation to offer premature answers in the attempt to alleviate pain or force understanding.

Evaluation: Participants will be able to give voice to their own process of enlightenment. Formal and informal observations will reveal participants' ability

to make the necessary connections to explain the revelatory steps along their journey.

Narrative Mediator

Goal: Candidate inspires participants to create new narratives that release them from old conflict stories in order to live out new ways of relating to women.

Strategy 1: The candidate assists participants in identifying and exposing their narrative assumptions. Candidate will help participants to see how old narratives assumed male privilege and led to relationships with women built on domination-subordination.

Strategy 2: Candidate will help participants deconstruct their domination narrative, including the power of prior biblical interpretations. The candidate will develop activities that encourage the participants to create a new story, characterized by relationships with women that are respectful, meaningful, and equitable.

Evaluation: Ending surveys will indicate that participants have secured an understanding of the origin and impact of prior narratives. Seventy-five percent of the participants will participate in presentations that reflect a progression in thought as it relates to the creation of new narratives.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: TIMELINE

Date	Task/Activity	Tools Necessary to Complete Task	Person Responsible
3/2014	Proposal Approval	2 Copies of Proposal	Murray
3/2014	Meet with Site Team For proposal review	Skype, Copies of proposal	Murray
3/2014	Meet with Dr. Riggs	Meeting location, Copy of approved Proposal	Murray
3/2014	Develop surveys	Survey Monkey website, Hard copies of survey	Murray
3/2014	Identify Survey Participants	Names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses and other contact information for participants	Murray/Davis
3/2014	Administer Surveys	Airfare, Survey Monkey website, hard copies of survey, meeting location, refreshments, pens/pencils, camera Release forms	Murray
3/2014	Analyze survey results in light of available research, Review implementation plan	Meeting location, survey results, preliminary research compilation, Implementation plan, refreshments	Murray/Site team
4/2014	Secure Implementation team and assess needs for workshops	Implementation Plan, Leader of Men's group at Transforming Love Community (TLC)	Murray/Davis
4/2014	Invite participants to Workshop #1	Participants' contact information, web design of invitation	Murray/Site team member
4/2014	Workshop #1	Airfare, Meeting Location, Copies of Serenity Prayer, Survey results, workshop materials, music, refreshments, bibles ending survey for workshop	Murray/Johnson/Davis
5/2014	Meet with Dr. Riggs	Meeting location, proposal, initial survey results, video recording of workshop #1, workshop #1 surveys	Murray/Riggs
5/2014	Begin initial writing of thesis	Proposal, survey results, workshop #1 results and recording, compiled research resources	Murray
5/2014	Mail hard copy review and synopsis of workshop #1 to men	Participants contact information, copies of review/synopsis, postage	Murray/Site team
5/2014	Meet with Site team	Skype, Results from workshop# 1 and accompanying surveys, preliminary research	Murray/Site team

Date	Task/Activity	Tools Necessary to Complete Task	Person Responsible
5/2014	Meet with Implementation team in preparation for workshop #2	Skype/conference call, checklist for materials needed for workshop#2, Implementation plan	Murray/Davis
5/2014	Mail/send invitations for workshop#2	Participants' contact information, flyers/invitations, postage	Murray/Site team
5/2014	Workshop #2	Airfare, meeting location, copies of Serenity Prayer, Dry erase board/markers, Power and Control Wheel (poster, hard copies), TV/DVD, Laptop, Projector, workshop materials, paper/pens, music, refreshments, ending survey for workshop	Murray/Johnson/Davis
6/2014	Meet with Dr. Riggs	Meeting location, proposal, video of workshop#2, Surveys from workshop #2, Research	Murray/Riggs
6/2014	Continue research and thesis writing	Proposal, Results and video from workshop #1 &2, Resources(books, articles, websites, interviews, etc)	Murray
6/2014	Mail/send synopsis of Workshop #2 to participants	Hard copy review/synopsis, participants' contact information, postage	Murray/Site team
6/2014	Meet with Site team	Skype, Results from workshop #2, Compiled research, survey results from workshop	Murray/Site team
6/2014	Meet with Implementation team in preparation for workshop #3	Skype/Conference call, Implementation plan, checklist for materials needed for workshop #3.	Murray/Davis
6/2014	Workshop #3	Airfare, meeting location, copies of Serenity Prayer, Workshop materials, Laptop, projector, White board/markers, TV/DVD, bible, refreshments, ending survey	Murray/Johnson/Davis
7/2014	Meet with Dr. Riggs	Meeting location, proposal, Surveys and results from workshop #3, Video recording of workshop #3, research	Murray/Riggs
7/2014	Research and Thesis writing	Proposal, Results and surveys from workshop #3, resources for research (books, articles, websites, interviews, etc)	Murray
7/2014	Mail synopsis of all prior workshops to participants, as well as preparation information for presentations	Participants contact information, hard copies of synopsis, review of prior workshops. Information, timeline, and agenda for upcoming presentation to TLC and guests	Murray/Site team

Date	Task/Activity	Tools Necessary to Complete Task	Person Responsible
7/2014	Preparation for final presentation, rehearsal, mailing invitations	Airfare, secure location, synopsis of all prior workshops, Video recorder, pictures, contact information for TLC members and guests, advertising/flyers, postage, videos of workshops, program for presentation, agenda for presentations	Murray/Participants
8/2014	Presentation to Transforming Love Community	Presentation location, Laptop, Screen & Projector, video and slideshow, Stage, Refreshments, Speakers, Microphone, Certificates for Participants, programs	Murray/Participants/Stephens
8/2014	Compilation of research, thesis writing	Resources for research (books, articles, websites, interviews, videos) surveys from workshops, project results	Murray
1/2015	Meeting with Dr. Riggs	Meeting location, preliminary draft of dissertation/project,	Murray/Riggs
2/2015	Submission of Final Dissertation	Final dissertation, Site team approvals, approval letter from Dr. Riggs	Murray
3/2015	Oral Presentation	Airfare, hotel accommodations, Final dissertation	Murray

APPENDIX B: BUDGET

Date	Task/Activity	Tools Necessary to Complete Task	Person Responsible	Budgetary Consideration Cost	Source of Funding
3/2014	Meet with Dr. Riggs	Meeting location, Copy of approved Proposal	Murray	\$20/Gas	Murray
3/2014	Develop surveys	Survey Monkey website, Hard copies of survey	Murray	\$204/Annual	Murray/ Site team
3/2014	Administer Surveys	Airfare, Survey Monkey website, hard copies of survey, meeting location, refreshments, pens/pencils, camera Release forms	Murray	\$250/Airfare \$50/Refreshments \$20/Copies/Pens	Murray/TLC Site Team Murray
3/2014	Analyze survey results in light of available research, Review implementation plan	Meeting location, survey results, preliminary research compilation, Implementation plan, refreshments	Murray/Site team	\$90/Meeting Room \$40/Refreshments	Murray/Site Team Murray
4/2014	Invite participants to Workshop #1	Participants' contact information, web design of invitation	Murray/Site team member	\$50/Flyers, Postage	Murray/Site team
4/2014	Workshop #1	Airfare, Meeting Location, Copies of Serenity Prayer, Survey results, workshop materials, music, refreshments, bibles ending survey for workshop, video recording	Murray/Johnson/Davis	\$250/Airfare \$30/Hard copies of materials \$50/Refreshments \$25/Video recording	Murray/TLC Murray Site Team Murray
5/2014	Meet with Dr. Riggs	Meeting location, proposal, initial survey results, video recording of workshop #1, workshop #1 surveys	Murray/Riggs	\$20/Gas	Murray

Date	Task/Activity	Tools Necessary to Complete Task	Person Responsible	Budgetary Consideration Cost	Source of Funding
5/2014	Mail hard copy review and synopsis of workshop #1 to men	Participants contact information, copies of review/synopsis, postage	Murray/Site team	\$25/Copies, Postage	Site Team
5/2014	Mail/send invitations for workshop#2	Participants' contact information, flyers/invitations, postage	Murray/Site team	\$50/Flyers, postage	Murray/Site team
5/2014	Workshop #2	Airfare, meeting location, copies of Serenity Prayer, Dry erase board/markers, Power and Control Wheel (poster, hard copies), TV/DVD, Laptop, Projector, workshop materials, paper/pens, music, refreshments, ending survey for workshop	Murray/Johnson/Davis	\$250/Airfare \$30/Hard copies of materials \$50/Refreshments \$25/Video recording	Murray/TLC Murray Site Team Murray
6/2014	Meet with Dr. Riggs	Meeting location, proposal, video of workshop#2, Surveys from workshop #2, Research	Murray/Riggs	\$20/Gas	Murray
6/2014	Mail/send synopsis of Workshop #2 to participants	Hard copy review/synopsis, participants' contact information, postage	Murray/Site team	\$25 Copies/Postage	Site Team
6/2014	Workshop #3	Airfare, meeting location, copies of Serenity Prayer, Workshop materials, Laptop, projector, White board/markers, TV/DVD, bible, refreshments, ending survey	Murray/Johnson/Davis	\$250/Airfare \$30/Hard copies of materials \$50/Refreshments \$25/Video recording	Murray/TLC Murray Site Team Murray
7/2014	Meet with Dr. Riggs	Meeting location, proposal, Surveys and results from workshop #3, Video recording of workshop #3, research	Murray/Riggs	\$20/Gas	Murray

Date	Task/Activity	Tools Necessary to Complete Task	Person Responsible	Budgetary Consideration Cost	Source of Funding
7/2014	Mail synopsis of all prior workshops to participants, as well as preparation information for presentations	Participants contact information, hard copies of synopsis, review of prior workshops. Information, timeline, and agenda for upcoming presentation to TLC and guests	Murray/Site team	\$35/Copies, Postage	Murray/Site team
7/2014	Preparation for final presentation, rehearsal, mailing invitations	Airfare, secure location, synopsis of all prior workshops, Video recorder, pictures, contact information for TLC members and guests, advertising/flyers, postage, videos of workshops, program for presentation, agenda for presentations	Murray/Participants	\$250/Airfare \$30/Hard copies of materials \$100/Flyers/prog. \$50/Refreshments \$25/Video recording	Murray/TLC Murray Donation Site team Murray
8/2014	Presentation to Transforming Love Community	Presentation location, Laptop, Screen & Projector, video and slideshow, Stage, Refreshments, Speakers, Microphone, Certificates for Participants, programs	Murray/Participants/Stephens	\$750/Room rental/Equip/Food \$50/Video recording \$40/Certificates	TLC Site team Murray
1/2015	Meeting with Dr. Riggs	Meeting location, preliminary draft of dissertation/project,	Murray/Riggs	\$20/Gas	Murray
2/2015	Submission of Final Dissertation	Final dissertation, Site team approvals, approval letter from Dr. Riggs	Murray	\$25 FedEx	Murray
3/2015	Oral Presentation	Airfare, hotel accommodations, Final dissertation	Murray	\$250/Airfare \$350/Hotel	Murray/TLC Family

APPENDIX C: SELF-PROFILE CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION MEDIATOR

As a conflict mediator, I see myself as an agent of transformation – grounded in the framework of Narrative Mediation. Narrative Mediation, as espoused by John Winslade and Gerald Monk in their book, *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution* proposes that people’s experiences of the world are directly influenced by the stories and values of the culture.⁸ My ministerial competencies demand that participants explore the life narratives that contribute to existing or evolving conflict. As a religious and spiritual leader, and as a counselor, my intent is to invite people to embrace a new narrative based on the evolving awareness that mediation provides.

A religious educator challenges people to see themselves and their relationship to society in an enlightened manner. In the framework of narrative mediation, a religious educator encourages the hearer to uncover, recover, and discover. The hearer must first uncover the conflict story in which he/she has been trapped. This could be a story that has been transmitted through religious, cultural, or societal conditioning. However adopted, as a religious educator, my task is to help the participant(s) garner the courage to, first, recognize the dominant narrative of their life and then to exhibit further courage in the attempt to redefine the narrative. It is vitally important that I develop the capacity to be sensitive, yet creative, while guiding the hearer through this process. I must help the participant to envision a new way of being that is predicated on continuous spiritual growth. The skills that I exhibit as a religious educator fit very well with the competencies needed to effectively engage in narrative mediation.

⁸ J. Winslade, and G. Monk, “Narrative Mediation: Re-authoring Conflict Stories,” *ACResolution* 6, no.2 (2007): 12-13.

The competencies needed to be an effective counselor lend themselves very well to narrative mediation. As a counselor, I must always realize that I can never expect people to go where I am not willing to go myself. While encouraging others to explore the narratives of their lives, I must remain open, accepting, and non-judgmental in the process. The ability to display transparency is key to establishing a relationship that is built on trust and genuine concern. As a *wounded healer*, my intention is to shine light on some of the narratives that have caused conflict in my own life, in the attempt to encourage the hearer to do the same. While focusing on the functions of healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling, I will be asking hearers to engage in these functions by re-authoring the narratives that have led to conflict in their lives. In doing so, the counselor must walk with participants through their journeys/stories. The ultimate goal of reconciliation with self and others, and self and God will always be my primary goal. My prayer is that this will be accomplished through the creation of new stories that are based on understanding, respect, love, and collaboration.

Spiritual leadership, in the context of narrative mediation, requires that I provide spiritual guidance to people's relationship with God and spiritual interpretation to the events of their lives. In doing so, I must guide participants to see how certain narratives of their lives have led to conflict. By interpreting these events in a spiritual context, my goal will be for them to see how their beliefs have contributed to their current reality – a reality often characterized by conflict. Sound spiritual leadership will ensure that participants recognize how new thoughts that proceed from a new narrative will lead to a life with reduced conflict and increased peace. It also is my task, as a spiritual leader, to encourage hearers to establish regular spiritual practices that support their new narratives.

The creation of new spiritual disciplines, as well as the daily practice of these disciplines, will be necessary to prevent participants from falling back into the old narratives that produced conflict.

The competencies that I've undertaken lend themselves well to the cause of narrative mediation. The courage to look at oneself and be willing to see *self* differently is no light task. It takes a skilled and compassionate practitioner to foster a space where one can do that. It is my opinion that narrative mediation provides the best framework for one to take an honest look at who they've been and be willing to become a new creation.

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Appendix B: Power and Control Wheel



DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT

202 East Superior Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802
218-722-2781
www.duluth-model.org

Appendix C: Full interview with D.E. Paulk

SMURRAY

D E Paulk Interview.mp3

Date: 02-23-2016

Q: Alright so...oh am I ready?

Q2: Mmm-hmm.

Q: And everyone Pastor D E Paulk of Spirit and Truth Sanctuary in Decatur and so I just want to ask you a couple of questions. You know we've been talking about...well first of all, you know, the message is inclusion and it kind of goes in line with what I'm doing in school in too. We're talking about how scripture has been used to oppress and suppress and in this case, we're talking about...talking about the suppressing of women and then maybe eventual violence towards women and so I just thought it was good to talk to you because you've got a...you've been in church almost in your whole life, you know, and generations of that. And just a few questions and then we can just talk briefly. So as one who's been in the church your entire life, how have you seen and I know you have, but if you can speak of how you've seen that biblical language has been used sometimes to suppress others, but particularly women in the church.

A: It's...it's...it's so prevalent that it's almost hidden because it becomes common culture. The...the common story is of Eve being the one that tempted her husband and so the curse of man supposedly coming through Eve to the Old Testament stories of what a woman's worth is and they actually give a figure of shekels and even say that a younger woman is worth more shekels than an older woman. You know, if you follow that on through there's really only one book, well two, the book of Ruth and Esther, neither that were necessarily authored by women, but sort of about women. The scourge of Mary Magdalene never being accepted by the other apostles or disciples yet being arguably the

closest to Jesus, you know, Peter refused her, the council of Nicea refusing her gospel, so it's, you know, part of a different set of gospels. It's been common language. That bled into modern church culture where women from Paul's teaching were to be silent in church. At some point they were allowed to sing in church, but could not teach. A woman should be silent in church, if she has a question, she should ask her husband at home, "For I will not suffer a woman to teach me," is Paul's doctrine. It turned into modern church culture, even when a woman was obviously anointed to teach or preach, they would never call them pastor or reverend or preacher, they would call them church mother, mother so-and-so, mother this, mother that. You know, finally they would say prophetess a little bit but the oppression has been...it's been so prevalent that it has almost gone unnoticed because it's just been such a part of our common culture, very familiar.

Q: Wow. In that, when you look at that, I mean you spoke of it a little bit, playing out in the church, I know we were talking even men yesterday, we were talking about coming up in our different traditions and in some of the same things and I said well I saw the women were just Sunday school teachers when I grew up. Have you seen, in the course of your ministry and what you've seen, have you...what changes have you seen as far as women's participation in church or those titles, different titles being used with their participation or, you know, just their inclusion in this whole message? Have you seen changes in your years?

A: Sure, yeah. There's been some significant strides. There are now, in some denominations, women who are the senior pastor of the, you know, the church. There are others even locally to where I pastor, where we attend, is there's a specific denomination that has a woman as their senior pastor, but the denomination said we wouldn't recognize you as part of us if you don't take her out and put a man in and the local church said, "She is our pastor and you can take us out of the denomination if you..."

Q: This is recent:

A: This is in the past couple of a years at a large church. If I said the name, you might be familiar with it, but so there are still some waging of which consciousness are we going to fall into, but you see some uprising, even if it's in local churches, saying we're not going to be bound by these ancient doctrines of men, they're evil.

Q: When you have heard about and read about stories that are prevalent in the Bible and, you know, it's so common when you see or hear about women being the spoils of war or rape that takes place in the Bible, would you say, you know, from your perspective, that also plays into how women are seen in the church and the culture of oppression, even outside the church? When you see these things about rape and how women are treated and, Sarah, what was that, that slave girl who got...do you think that plays into, you know, have you seen that play into men's consciousness as they lead the church?

A: Well not only from a Biblical perspective, but just from a religious perspective in general. That plays into the treatment, the denigration of women, the abuse, and it all goes back to the literal mind. Paul has a teaching in, I believe, 1 Corinthians 3 says, "The letter," and that word comes from the root there the literal, "The literal kills but the spirit gives life." And whether is Christianity, whether it is more in the news today is Islam, of radical groups as part of their taking over an area, they see the women as part of their prize and they become sex slaves or, you know, whatever they want to use them for. But that, all that comes back from literal interpretations of not God's word to man, but man's word about God, that we call either the Bible, the Quran, the Bhagavad Gita, they are man's attempt to understand God but coming through a lot of culture and opinion. But, yeah, some of them written 3,000, 2,000 years ago, it's still that language, that culture, that ancient archaic culture is still oppressing in modern day because of the literal minds who can't update their religion with the way that, not God is changing, but man is changing ideas. Hopefully, you know, better ideas about God.

Q: Yeah, yeah. And you've seen, I know you've done a lot of extensive traveling around the world and I'm assuming that you've seen that in different variations?

A: Yeah. My uncle, my predecessor had a very close confidant contemporary who pastored the largest church in Nigeria in Africa and he died unexpectedly and so there was some jockeying for position and who was going to take his position. We flew over to Nigeria and put his wife in place as the new archbishop of that church, which she was the first ordained consecrated bishop in the country of Nigeria and, you know, we flew over and did, we came back to America, then she had to deal with the people's opinions, the men fighting her and even the women fighting her. She got it from both sides. The men didn't want her there, the women thought she was overstepping her boundary, but only history will tell what that will do for women in, you know, in the country of Nigeria.

Q: Yeah. Yeah. What would you suggest for men who are coming in to church, who people are still literal and read the Bible and look to scripture for their I know what you do here, I mean almost no answer to this question, but what would you suggest for men who are reading these things in the Bible, who are literal as to how to read the Bible and how to interpret, as you talked about Paul and then we talk about what's in the Bible and even the fact that Jesus, in his actions, was different towards women than what was the common norm at that time. When you look at the way Jesus, how would you comment on the way Jesus...how Jesus treated women?

A: Well you see a little of a dichotomy. He has five in the days of His flesh. When Jesus was still encumbered, a little bit unconscious of the greater divinity that was about to shine through Him, there was still some culturism, some tribalism that was happening, some chauvinism that was happening in there. He refers to His mother at some points as just woman, you know, woman, I have nothing to do with you. That's not only His ego talking, some of that is His culture talking, why are you...why is this woman, who is my mother, who is my father, you know, some of that is coming through. But there's also some moments where He approaches...is approached by women of other nations, other cultures and He says to them, "A woman should not approach," but then later you see this evolution happening in Him where He is with the Samaritan woman at the well, at Jacob's well and she tries to go back into that consciousness, you know, you just don't speak to Samaritans, women don't speak to men. And He said, "The hour is coming

when all those labels are about to fall off and we're going to be seen truly as a divine family." So as Jesus progressed, as He was five, having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation. We must be perfected, the men in churches, the men that are reading literal, the men that are trapped in culture as Jesus was, must graduate from that literalism into the Christ anointed, awakened mind that knows that the Bible is man's...a guide to man, but that the Bible is not infallible and that's a big hurdle for many people. It was written by men to men and the Spirit of God does find its way into the pages, but we must rightly divide between what's opinion, what's culture, and what really is eternal truth. But there's a scripture that says, "Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing, transformed by the renewing of the mind." Men who are trapped in ancient archaic teachings about women and the keeping of a woman in her place, there's no transformation happening because their mind is not being constantly renewed. That's what made Jesus special is He learned His culture, but He was constantly, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds," there's a constant proceeding word that sometimes religion doesn't make place for.

Q: Yeah. Yeah. Just a couple more questions. What would you suggest also, would you suggest the same for women, women who are coming in, there are many women who are still under that same consciousness, you know, who come up in church and believe that is still their place or whatever, you know, or certainly there are those who are...people use the feminist movement, they call it feminist or movements. What would you suggest for women who are, you know, trying to come out from under that and pursuing ministry now, pursuing that?

A: My exhortation would be just to think generationally. This is not really God's plan for your daughters, for your granddaughters. The first, as we call, I don't know that I believe in generational curses, but sometimes there's a breaker of a cycle that is a cycle of consciousness and whether that's being the first that graduates with a degree in your family, the first that starts their own...there's many firsts in families, but, you know, as a woman, even if it's the tradition or the cycle, the vicious cycle in your family, there is enough strength within each of us to be the breaker of that cycle. And there's not going

to be a lot of thanksgiving accolades or praise given to the breaker of it, the praise will come from the other generations that look back and say, "I, as a woman, cannot be a doctor, I would not have been a lawyer, a preacher, a pastor, a politician, a business entrepreneur, a television mogul, had it not been for my mother who showed me I could be just as good as a man. I could be everything that God has called me to be."

Q: Yeah. Yeah. I, in some of the readings I've done, I've looked back and, you know, when you talk about images and look at some of the original concepts or images of God, I've read some things that suggest even the original images where God is this, you know, there was a feminine...what would you say was the reason why that, at some point in history, that changed, because patriarchy took over and, you know, these original images of goddesses and prophetesses and is different? If not knowing the specific time, what's one reason you can pinpoint that that changed or that was suppressed?

A: Well even in the effort to suppress the idea of the feminine aspects of God, with our best attempts, with man's best attempt, it still bleeds through, you know. We see in the...even in the first chapter of Genesis, "Let us make man in our image." It doesn't say let us make male in our...and then, you know in the book of Genesis, you have two different creation stories. One that I refer to as man's story. One that's a more divine story. The male aspect of that is Adam or male was made first. Well Adam was not male or female, Adam was man, mankind, human, but that the woman came out of the man and so she must be subservient to the man because the man came...the male came first. But there's another Genesis story that I believe is more of divine inspiration, that is they were created, God made them, blessed them, gave them the great commission. And so even in the midst of man trying to suppress it, as you said, there still is these little moments where you go how did that slip through there? How did the second creation story slip through that says God created them? Told them to take dominion and, you know, be fruitful and multiply. So, yeah, I mean it's common, it's still around today. Its insecurities, it's man's desire to control and but it's getting better. It is, it's on the way.

Q: Last question. Personally, how did you being in ministry for some many years and so many generations in front of you, how did you move to inclusion, what was your...if you can speak briefly, to how it was that made you move towards inclusion, coming from...

A: To inclusion as it affects women?

Q: Yeah, women and inclusion, but particularly women, but, yeah, as an inclusionary pastor.

A: You know there's a pattern that you see, not just in Scripture but in society that is all-tending toward inclusion. I think it was Dr. King talked about the moral arch of the universe, it is long, but it tends or bends, curves toward justice. You might not be able to see it because it's so long, but eventually...and I have seen that tendency, whether it was the emancipation of slaves, whether it was women's rights, now, you know, gay rights, it never seems to end, immigrants. It's a non-ending cycle of human's learning one little lesson at a time, which is a little frustrating because we could have learned it all at one time, whether it were the lesson of racism, the lesson of gender equality. We could have learned all of that at one time, but we have to keep learning...got to learn about slavery, now we got to learn about woman, now we got to learn about gay people, now we got to learn about religious differences. You know, it seems to be a really an...there's an old movie titled *The Gods Must be Crazy* and it's saying we must be crazy because we've been given this divine, creative power, but the way that we willed that power is not always for the benefit of all. And so in my journey it was...there was some experiences I had, some dreams that I had where I felt like there were some divine ideas coming to me. Seeing people of different color, different races, different backgrounds, different gender, different sexual orientations and recognizing the good in them, what I would call the Christ in them. How can I deny, you know, this person is gifted, this person is loving, this person is caring, this person has a love for God, yet religion would tell me they are flawed, they are somehow not as worthy. So there's a crisis in all of our walks, whether we hear it or not and every literalist at some point will come into a crisis with us, the crisis of their family, the crisis of the contradiction of Scripture that is completely

contradicts it in different places. And so as the literal dies and did die in my life, the Spirit became alive, you know, and it's been living and breathing and having it's way in being in me and getting me in trouble ever since.

Q: It's been freeing people up so, you know, certainly for us, you know. It's a blessing to be here. I appreciate you...

A: I wanted to say before you close it, I don't know who all will hear this interview, but both Spencer and Erica Murray have done a great deal of teaching at our local church to the men about, you know, harmful language and the ways that religion can be oppressive to women and every good man should know when a woman is not happy, the men aren't happy and so he's making some happy men and women at Spirit of Truth Sanctuary.

Q: Thank you. Thank you. That's exactly what we did yesterday, what you were talking about? The creation stories and language and all that's...

A: Yeah. Isn't that awesome? Man when I found that other creation story, I was like now hold on just a...

Q: I know, I know. That's what I told the men yesterday. You never heard that in church, you always heard the other one.

A: Well the other thing, I taught this one time, I taught that Adam was a hermaphrodite.

Q: Oh yeah?

A: And that he was neither male nor female, but both in him and that in order for us to get back to the garden, we had to get in touch with the masculine and the feminine in us. Some of the men start squirming when you talk about getting in touch with the feminine.

Q: I know, I know, I know. It's funny when I...as I write up this thing, I can write up my observations of, you know, if things didn't go as planned. In my proposal, I can also write my observations. If I saw men being uncomfortable when you talk about that. You know what I mean? That's an observation that, in this day and time, that some men are still uncomfortable, you know. I did one in Detroit, the men were like, "What do you mean, what do you mean, I'm feminine?" I'm not trying to say, I'm just...we're talking about masculine and feminine, you know...

A: But it's powerful, too, for you, if I can kind of say this, for you to teach that because on the surface, you don't have a lot of feminine traits about you, not your outward appearance, your mannerisms. Doesn't mean it's good, bad, or indifferent. Everyone has their own flavor in how they present themselves, but sometimes it feels like there's an agenda. It's powerful for a heterosexual man to talk about equality with both women and the same gender loving community because you can stand back from it and say I don't necessarily have a dog in the fight, I just know what's good for one is good for all of us.

Q: Exactly. Sweet. In your face. How are you on time, you still good on time?

A: Yeah. What's it...yeah, I didn't go very long this morning, so yeah. I was about...

Q: Well when I saw people coming out, I thought I was a little early. I thought service was still in, I was like what the...what the...am I late?

A: I did a...I took one of the top ten songs on the popular charts right now, it's called Take Me to Church, you'll see it...if you stay for the...you'll see the lyrics are...

Q2: Yeah, that's something else.

A: Crying. Crying out like this is what the church is telling me to do, this is who I am. And so basically, at the end of the song, it finally says just give me the deathless death, which is he's just saying, "I'll just go to hell because I can't change who I am." He talks

about, they tell me I'm born in sin, born broken, then he says, "So command me to be healed." This is not the top ten on the gospel charts, it's top ten on the secular charts right now. He says if I'm born sick, command me to be well. In other words, if your Jesus is so powerful, make me not gay, take it out right now. Yeah, he's...

Q: You know I just read this morning, last couple of days, I was reading this...this newspaper, independent newspaper. Did you hear about the pastor or somebody who was in the pulpit and he said, "I'm not gay anymore," or something like that. Did you see that recently?

A: Yes, I saw it.

Q: He said something like...

A: Then he tried to say it like kind of rough. They keep...he went...he said I want to give a testimony, he was talking kind of feminine and he went, "I don't like mens no more." Mens, plural, "I don't like mens no more."

Q: See I just saw the headline. What?

Q2: They're trying to sue him?

Q: But now it's a headline, it says the church is trying to sue him for something...I don't know if he said something to the...or if he...because he was saying that they prayed the gay out, the gay is gone away now, right or something like that, right?

A: Prayed the gay away. There was a...

SMURRAY/pti:dr

Appendix D: Full Interview with Lori Robinson

SMURRAY

Lori Robinson Interview.mp3

Date: 02-23-2016

Q: So we're here talking with Lori Robinson, who is a good friend and author of *I Will Survive*, that's the African American guide to healing sexual assault and abuse. Is that correct?

A: That is correct.

Q: So, Lori, when you look at just your experiences and experiences of just countless other women who have been, and I use this word very loosely, victims of violence, whether it be physical violence, psychological violence, abuse, how do you think that society, society that has been male dominated and that patriarchal nature, how would you say it contributes to the environment where this kind of violence is prevalent?

A: I would say contribute...contributes is not even the word, it's the foundation of the environment that produces and perpetuates violence against women of...or gender-based violence of all types. Just the...so patriarchy, or male-dominated society that establishes, by definition it is a society in which women are less valued than men and which men give themselves and it's accepted by then...accepted society-wide that men are entitled to power and control over women, then it's kind of a just rich breeding ground for the types of behavior...these types of behaviors.

Q: Yeah. Yeah. Yep. So and no, that's interesting that you said that because when I asked you the question how it contributes, it would...that would suggest that there is something else that exists, where that comes out of there. But you're saying it's the society itself, it's just the society itself that is a breeding ground for that.

A: Because I think, sorry to interrupt you, but I'm thinking if it's a matriarchal society, does this happen?

Q: Right. Yeah, that's what I'm saying, yeah. So society itself, that...now do you see in your work, have you seen in your work, whether it be men or women or anybody, who works towards, you know, trying to work towards a more equitable society or whatever? Do you hear people talking about that, so when they address the issues of any type of violence, do you see them mainly addressing those episodes of violence or are they addressing this big systemic thing of the society, this male-dominated...what do you see most or do you see it moving or how have you seen that change?

A: Yeah. I feel like I've been...because of my work, I've been blessed to be exposed to a lot of service providers, but also activists, scholars and people who deal with this subject within a variety of contexts. So I definitely have been exposed to people who are looking at and addressing the institutionalized systemic underpinnings of gender-based bias. I do think...so this is one of the things that I learned reporting a book was that when the women's movement came along and created the first rape crisis centers, I believe, in the early 70s, they were...it was a grassroots movement and their intention from the beginning was to work to a changing society and ending the violence as they served survivors and then once it became, you know, to survive it became part of the nonprofit industrial complex or you're getting funding from the government and/or foundations. Well they are naturally invested in maintaining the system and so what I was told was that once they started accepting this money because they needed it to survive, they...what...the services that they could provide and the work that they were doing got...was, in a sense, dictated by whoever was funding them. And so the "movement," when you look at the network of rape crisis centers, became much more service provider focused. So in that sense, if you go to a rape crisis center, they do some community education, but mostly their function is to serve survivors, which obviously is really, really important. But I would say that the work of ending violence against women, the work of dismantling the systems and the patriarchy, the foundation,

dismantling the foundation that allows this...that enables and perpetuates this society to raise boys into men who behave...who commit this violence, who behave in these problematic ways, I kind of feel like those people get hired by rape crisis centers, but they're not necessarily able to do that work. But they're scholars, they're activists and there are a few nonprofit organizations that are able to really focus on that. So like men stopping violence, the one in D.C., men can stop rape, those kinds of organizations, but, yeah, it's like that's so needed and that's not what necessarily gets funded to the degree of just serving survivors.

Q: Have you seen, and this is just something I thought of as you were saying that, have you seen at any point in your work or heard that as the services move toward, you know, these nonprofits who are doing rape, you know, who are doing, you know, becoming service providers and they were taking money, has that affected the number of women who might come in and take advantage of some services and then have to come back again? You know how people go into the penal system and sometimes they don't get rehabilitated and then they have a system that it doesn't affect the root cause of the behavior and so they end up having another incidence of that, have you...do you think or have you seen with it moving toward service providers and doing these things that have places, is it helping? I guess that's my thing, is it helping or do you see because of their women continuing to be...or go back to situations or still be victims or, you know, and we know society...that's still in a society that's going to do that...

A: Well okay if I remember correctly and I don't have the numbers in my head, but if I remember correctly, there's some kind of statistics that you could probably find or that you may already know that indicate that, you know, if you've been victimized once by a certain age, the likelihood of you being victimized more than once in your lifetime is higher than someone who hasn't been victimized at a younger age. There's something...I'm probably not getting it quite right, but so that doesn't exactly address your question about...

Q: But it does. I mean I don't...I'll look for the numbers but, you know, that's just a thought that I had.

A: I think...I don't know that whether or not...I guess I don't know whether or not...I mean I think rape crisis centers help period because if you've been victimized, chances are, not everybody needs therapy, but chances are very high that therapy, talking to someone who is trained to support you...to support people who have had this experience will be beneficial to you. So, first of all, absolutely what exists is helpful. Now does it make a difference in terms of women...so I guess we're talking like rape crisis centers and domestic violence shelters also? Does it make a diff...I don't know the statistics like of women who get those services, are they...do they end up victimized again, but I would say that...I would guess that it probably doesn't make a difference because the work that has to be done to decrease or end violence is working with boys and men.

Q: Yes. That was my next question, yes.

A: So what exists is absolutely essential and helpful, but I don't think that...and, right, again, I do think rape crisis centers do some community education, but not nearly at a level that's needed to significantly change the culture.

Q: Are you seeing an increase in men now or men's organizations that are contributing to this work because, you know, that's, you know, the work that I'm doing is exactly what it says, you know. It's because if men and that it's not a women's issue, and, you know, my man, what's the guy's name who I...I got his books downstairs. I've done so many things in...his suggestion in workshops, you know, a white guy, man his name just escapes me, but anyway, he does this thing on You Tube, he does...

A: Oh like one of those tough guys?

Q: Yeah this is him right here. Yeah, yeah, actually he does some of this...Jackson Katz.

A: Oh okay that's who Byron heard, came up under.

Q: Yeah, yeah, Jackson Katz and so, you know, and he does this thing, he does many things with talking about how this is a men's issue. In your time, in doing this work, have you seen an increase of men who are interested in doing the work?

A: It seems...I think so, but I think it seems really slight like yeah, they're...maybe they're...I mean and I'm not working in this like on a regular basis, so there's definitely a good possibility that organizations exist that I don't know about but it seems like okay when I've started...when I was reporting the book, there were like...I knew of a handful of organization...men's organizations doing this work and now maybe there's a handful more. It's not like now there's a 100, now they're in every state, no. I haven't seen that.

Q: Right. How have you seen the system that we're talking about play out when women begin to report these incidents of violence or rape or whatever they are? How do you see, you know, and I don't know...we probably know, but how have you seen that play as far as them getting help or as far as there's a tendency to blame the victim? Do you find that, did you see that same, within your experience and experiences that you've seen, have you seen this system play out where is still blames the woman or is not friendly towards women who are victimized?

A: So in my case, I really didn't experience what a lot of women experienced because I was raped by strangers who had a weapon and that's people's stereotypical, but actually really rare idea of how rape happens. So having said that, I do think it's still really common for people to blame the victim. I think women do it in part because they want to think that...they want to believe that if I dress a certain way and if I don't...if I'm at the, you know, don't put myself in the wrong place, the wrong place or what have you, then I'm safe, not understanding that the majority of people are raped by someone they know, someone they have no reason to believe that they shouldn't be safe around and not understanding that you're not...people don't get raped because they're sexy or too sexy

or just really not understanding why it happens. Because we're not...as a society, we don't teach adequately, inform our children or our adults adequately. Did that answer your question? Because I feel like I didn't answer it completely. Was there another part of it?

Q: Well, yeah, it was I mean it did and I was just exploring how this system, when a woman goes to...

A: Oh right. There's still victim blaming instances. Okay.

Q: Yeah. And how does that look, what does that look like sometimes?

A: Oh okay. So a friend of mine this weekend was telling me she does rape crisis course...like phone line, hotline counseling or I don't think she does it in person, but whatever the case, she had a young white woman, I guess who was raped or who wasn't raped, was almost raped, when she said she fought back and beat the hell out of this dude, but she was still feeling guilty because she had been drinking and her father was yelling at her about drinking, you shouldn't have been drinking. So that's one specific example and I just definitely think in general don't, you know, don't be a woman who maybe, you know, is...enjoys having sex with different men like men enjoy having sex with different women and that's acceptable because if that woman, people know that about her and then she does end up in a situation where someone forces sexual activity on her that she doesn't want, who's going to believe her? And then don't be a woman who is raped by someone who's rich and famous or not even rich and famous, but just considered an upstanding person in the community, like a minister or a teacher or even within the black community specifically just an ordinary black dude who's not otherwise in trouble because as a community, we still...and it's understandable because obviously black men are getting killed by police. We knew this, but now it's, you know, we see it in a way we hadn't seen it before because of technology, our phones. You know, we know the statistics about the prison industrial complex and the disproportionate number of men in prison and, you know, we can just go on and on about inequality and black men and so

we have this, I think, knee-jerk reaction to protect men, black women and black men do this I think, to protect men and so black woman and black feminists in particular and I really admire like black feminist scholars who articulate this much better than I do, are like I'm black and I'm a woman at the same time and it's not acceptable for anyone to ask me to prioritize the safety of race over...my race over this...or safety based on my race or safety based on my gender. And so I think the black community...part of it is the black community in the United States is part of the national culture so there's the same patriarchy that exists, sexism that exists, but then there's also this...all these disparities and inequalities that put black men at risk and in danger. I mean going back to lynching and the fact that many men who were lynched were falsely accused of sexual crimes against white women and so it's...I get it, it's understandable. It didn't come from nowhere that our community does this, but it's like its 2015 folks. It's time to like wake up and be honest with ourselves about what's happening in our households and in our community. And so I feel like it's not...I know it hurts to really face the truth about what's going on but if we don't, that's bad for everybody.

SMURRAY/pti:dr

Appendix E: Full Interview with Men of Spirit and Truth (M.O.S.T.)

SMURRAY

Men of Transformation.mp3

Date: 02-26-2016

Q: ...that you had over the years. I mean from a young guy growing up where you can see that was true, whether it was actualized in the home or how you saw women treated in the church or the roles that you saw women in in the church. Because when you get to that we're also going to talk about gender roles. What did we see women doing? Or what were we taught from a religious standpoint about women? Can anyone speak on that about some of the early teachings that you heard or that you might have seen?

A1: I would say that I grew up Missionary Baptist Church.

Q: Okay.

A1: And typically a woman could be...they would call her a missionary.

Q: Okay.

A1: She could be an elder but she couldn't have the role of a pastor, and even if she did have more of a teaching ministry or preaching ministry, she still had to maintain the title of a missionary or maybe even an evangelist, but then she couldn't have her own church, even if she was the predominant speaker. She still had to be married to maybe a bishop or a pastor.

Q: Right.

A1: Even though she was the one who handled the crux of the preaching and administrative duties, it couldn't be her church. It had to be his church and she was just basically in that role.

Q: Yeah.

A1: And I heard a lot of the teachings about women are to be silent in church.

Q: Yeah.

A1: So they could only go so far even though you clearly could see that this was this woman's church.

Q: Yeah.

A1: And she had the anointing for ministry in that church.

Q: Yeah.

A1: But her husband basically sat there quietly and he was the pastor of the church.

Q: Yeah.

A1: So I saw that a lot and as times have changed, it's a little different. A lot of times they will still let her be the pastor but then her husband has to be the senior pastor or the bishop.

Q: Yeah. Yeah.

A1: But I see that. A lot of women that I knew in those circles, they kind of left the church and kind of became independent or joined up with another group –

Q: Yeah.

A1: – so that they could fulfill their role as the pastor of the church.

Q: Exactly. Yeah.

A1: So I saw that a lot.

Q: Yeah.

A2: Mine was Southern Baptist. Well, my grandparents raised me Southern Baptist and similar. Only difference is, their women did not have a particular role. They were motherboard.

Q: Mm-hmm.

A2: And ____ deacon, and the deacons ran and oversaw anything the motherboard did or a church organization did. The pastor was a, let's say, chauvinist role, he had. He got a Cadillac every year. He had two churches.

[laughter]

Q: He was a dominant figure. A dominant figure.

A1: Mine drove a Lincoln.

A2: So I mean, that was my initial upbringing and understanding. And the pastor, he could do no wrong. Although figuratively he could do no wrong, his morals weren't always the same way, so.

Q: Exactly. Mm-hmm.

A2: So that made me...this is how I saw things. You saw a man in a role and at that time – I'm a little older than you. At that time, the pastor went to dinner at the deacon's homes.

Q: Oh yeah.

A1: At the church.

A2: At the church.

A1: Yeah, yeah.

Q: And they did the big meals.

A2: Therefore, the chicken...the big piece of chicken with the head –

Q: The head of the hog.

A1: He got there first.

Q: Yeah, that's who got it first.

A2: And the kids had the smaller table out in the den.

Q: Mm-hmm.

A2: So you had to...you knew this role. So that's what...and the women were the servant.

Q: Yeah.

A2: Although they had the power and they were the majority in the church.

Q: Right.

A2: They did not have the leadership roles, as you said before.

A1: Yeah. Yeah.

A3: I was actually married to, as you said, a minister. She was a lady and it was odd because the pastor was anointed, highly anointed, but every role that the women had in the church was pretty much to be submissive to the man.

Q: Mm-hmm.

A3: I mean, literally be submissive. If he had sweat on his brow, they would jump off and wipe the sweat off his brow. You know, it's to the point to where he, as you said, he couldn't do any wrong. And that's what was taught in the church. And I'm from Louisiana where you have different, I'll say you may have four churches on the street.

Q: Yeah.

A3: Each one of them may be different in some aspect where you have one preaching, he'd get a Cadillac. He'd get a brand new car, brand new house.

Q: Right.

A3: The churches provided everything for you.

Q: Exactly.

A3: Anything that he says, even if the congregation knew it's wrong, they're going to support him because they're mindset is, "He can't do any wrong."

Q: Right.

A3: "He's anointed by God."

Q: Right.

A3: "God is guiding this man." He's a human being.

Q: Right.

A3: He has an affair. He has a kid. You know, he's doing everything – I say everything a man, but – a fleshly man does.

Q: Yeah.

A3: But they're acknowledging him as he being almost above God.

Q: Yeah.

A3: Because he can't do any wrong.

Q: Yeah.

A3: And it's just...it's crazy. I mean, now that I can sit back and think back to that time and –

Q: Yeah.

A3: You weren't taught to challenge him.

Q: Yeah.

A3: Anything and everything he said.

Q: Yeah.

A3: It was it. That was the law.

Q: Yeah.

A3: So even if you had a difference in opinion, and a lot of people, as I said where I'm from, you have four churches, so if they went from one church, they left one church and went to the church right down the street.

Q: Yeah.

A3: Which was just almost the same just maybe a little bit more leeway to the women.

Q: Yeah.

A3: They all would preach. The pastor would start off saying one or two things and he'd say, "Okay, well, so-and-so is going to say some words for today." And that'd be the rest of the service. He would never move. And again, he could be sitting in the pew – a row of chairs – he'd sweat. They'd jump up. These are the women –

Q: Yeah.

A3: I mean –

Q: Yeah.

A3: He could do just so.

Q: Yeah.

A3: Yeah, you know?

Q: Yeah. It's – yeah.

A3: If he was at the pulpit and saw a piece of paper fall, somebody'd jump off the front row, grab the piece of paper almost before it hit the floor. So it's –

Q: Yeah.

A3: For me, it's...I'm enjoying my life now because I'm being educated.

Q: Yes.

A3: I'm always curious, so I'm being educated now. And that's –

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A3: That is helpful to me.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A4: And we have evolved and I'm sure here in this spiritual community where we are now –

Q: Yeah.

A4: - we know that we have evolved, not to the extreme, but we saw it many times in the old building, in the cathedral, we saw a lot of that same stuff.

Q: Yeah.

A4: Even though we had a female pastor on staff, I saw guys actually have their brows wiped and shoes tied in the pulpit.

A3: Well that's –

Q: Yes.

A4: And I said, you know, and I really actually still had that same psychological thought behind a man of God being like God.

Q: Mm-hmm.

A3: Right.

A1: Yeah.

A4: Because he could do no wrong, I had put my family into...I was telling my son, I said, "I was so crazy that I put...I would not do anything unless I found out it was okay with the bishop."

Q: Yeah.

A1: Oh.

A4: And I thought that was crazy. And I really, seriously...

A1: Oh yeah.

A4: I said, now I look back and I say man, what was I thinking? I couldn't be my own...I had to ask a man of God or think that if he did it or if he said it –

A1: That was like that-

A4: I remember so vividly telling my kids on the way home in the car and they even laugh at me now. "Bishop said."

A3: So that was your law. That was your law of the house.

A4: That's how we're going to do it. And I just realized that ____ religious leaders.

A1: You know, and that said, I'm Missionary Baptist, so it was the same, whether Detroit or Georgia, Missionary Baptists are the same. You know, they're the same way. So the women wasn't in the pulpit. They were all my Sunday School teachers growing up.

A3: Oh definitely. They were definitely that. That was their role.

A1: And then they ran the Missionary Society. You know, they were the nurses and stuff like that.

Q: Right.

A1: They could preach on women or something like that.

A3: Yeah, they did – because women could consider all female things.

A1: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

A3: Well, I'm sorry. What we were taught –

A1: What we taught.

A3: - younger as being a female thing.

A2: The role.

A1: Right.

Q: Exactly. Exactly. Exactly.

A3: Because we did, again, now that we have evolved, we know better now.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A3: We didn't know any better. We went by what someone told us.

Q: Yes.

A3: Whether it was the elder person who grew up, again –

Q: Yes, yes.

A3: – listening to everything that the minister said and all they did was pass it on to us.

Q: Yes, yes.

A3: So that's all that we were doing.

Q: Yes, yes.

A3: So that's why I said, we're blessed in the sense of being able to think for ourselves now.

Q: Yes. And being evolved and staying aware. He's still staying aware of, you know, where I come from and moving this way. You said something interesting that just made me think about something else on a different arena, but the same thing. How people can be in a church or in a system, whether it's work or whether it's church or a job or whatever, in that you can know something is wrong –

A3: Mm-hmm.

Q: But you're still within the system.

A3: Yeah.

A1: Right.

Q: So you act – you know what I mean? So –

A1: Yeah.

A2: Yeah.

A3: Oh yeah.

Q: And I was talking to somebody the other day about...you know, I was interviewing my boys who play college football. A good friend of mine and I was just asking them some of their take and one of the guys played, he was a defensive back, played defense and I was talking about these things that have come out in the NFL about domestic violence -

A1: Mm-hmm.

Q: I said well, you know, when you are in the NFL and you're taught to be aggressive, you know what I'm saying? And particularly, you know, when you look at years ago, I think - I don't mean nothing about the Saints - I don't know if that was Sean Payton or somebody else - who was paying the cats, putting a bounty on the head of ____.

A2: He was one of them.

Q: You know what I'm saying?

A2: That's something most of them did.

Q: Well whoever it was -

Q: But he wasn't the only one. We know he wasn't the only one.

A3: No.

Q: But if you -

A3: For years, that's what they've been doing.

Q: Yeah, if you indoctrinate it into a system to be aggressive –

[all agreeing]

Q: – how do you turn that off? That's what I asked my man. How do you turn that off –

A3: Yeah.

Q: – when you get off the field if that's how you have to be?

A1: Mm-hmm.

Q: Because it was different. As I talked to them...I mean, we all played when we were little. I didn't play college but as that level increases –

A3: Right.

Q: Now it's about keeping your job.

A3: Mm-hmm.

Q: Now you have to be aggressive. Now you have to do that and you're taught to be this so how do you turn that off?

A1: Right.

Q: – when you're in a relationship.

A1: Yeah.

A3: Yeah.

Q: And when you've been taught these things, when you've been taught that to be a man is to be aggressive, because as I went over the other week, and we were catching up with everything we already did, so you aren't missing nothing –

A4: Okay.

Q: But what I talked about the other week was that when you look at violence in a society, overwhelmingly men and boys are commending the violence.

A3: Mm-hmm.

Q: When you look at the school shootings, when you look at, you know, it's boys and men. So what is it about the way boys and men are raised that makes them aggressive? Well, we're taught to be aggressive. And when you look at that...and now they're starting to do training – more training – for rookies coming in. But how do you turn that off when you're in the system?

A1: That's a good question.

A3: Good question.

A1: Yeah, that's a good question.

Q: You know what I mean? That's just...when you're taught to be that way. So just like in a church, if you're really indoctrinated into that thinking –

A3: Mm-hmm.

Q: How is that...even though you know...how is it affecting you when you get home? How is it affecting you with your –

A3: Like he said, he –

A2: It's actually funny because I was thinking, man, because it's scripture. In scripture, you know, I'm sure...it's almost shameful to think about it. You know, you quote Scriptures, especially men.

Q: Yeah.

A2: You know, we'll quote the first part of the Scripture.

Q: That's right.

A3: That's right.

A1: That's right, yep.

[talking over each other]

A2: "Women, submit yourselves to your husband." And we'll stop there.

A3: Mm-hmm.

Q: Right.

A2: I remember using this. I'm going to be vulnerable and say I did this. Y'all see Mary and y'all laugh at me.

A5: That's what I notice every time when pick with you. That's why I don't say nothing. It must be a reason why.

A2: So that's the crux of it. And I'm sure, that's what you knew, what was preached to you. Not necessarily – you just imitate what you already...you hear it from the pulpit.

Q: Yeah.

A2: And God said, "Women, submit yourselves to your husbands."

Q: Yeah. Right.

A2: And he don't go no further than that.

Q: Right.

A1: No, that's it.

A2: And then if you don't...if people...remember, the Southern Baptist, Missionary Baptist – when I first came here was the first time I heard pages turn in the Bible.

Q: Wow.

A2: You used to be in the cathedral, you would hear it when he went to preach. You would put your ear. He'd go [shhh]. You would hear pages turning.

A3: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

A2: You're like, "Oh, they're reading."

A3: Pretty much what they remember.

A2: But where I was raised, it wasn't a read. It was a telling.

Q: Telling, yes.

A2: They'd tell you exactly what the Scripture – they'd tell you. And in my grandmother's church – it was so crazy. I don't know if he could even read. The pastor would –

[laughter]

A2: He would have a woman...he had a woman. He'd say, "Read." And she would read all that Scripture.

A3: That is so true. That is exactly how they did it. That could be true why a lot of pastors...they could not read.

A2: And that's not funny, but that's deep.

A3: That is so true, though.

Q: Yes.

A5: Now I'm thinking that is so true because he always...the pastor himself never touched the Bible.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A5: The Bible sat at the end of the pulpit –

Q: Right, right.

A5: - throughout the whole service.

Q: Right.

A5: Throughout whatever was in the church.

Q: Yeah.

A5: He would come there. He had one person, whether it be a man or a woman, do the reading. And once they read, he would speak from that.

A1: Yeah.

A5: His interpretation of it. Not what the church would get or not what each member would get. His interpretation.

A1: Exactly.

A5: And if you're following that minister, what he said pretty much, that's like planting a seed. He done planted a seed. Now you may not have ever thought about it like that, but once you plant that seed –

Q: Yeah.

A5: “Oh, oh, I never thought about it like that. No. Oh, man. Oh.”

Q: Yeah.

A5: One thing could happen.

Q: Yeah.

A1: And then goes home and tells –

A3: And that's...maybe that makes animosity in the house.

A1: You're going to tell your husband that you need, you know...and he's like, "I'm the man of the house." You know what I mean?

A3: You don't tell me, you know what I mean?

A1: He just goes, "Ohh..."

A3: I've seen that happen again and again.

A1: Me too.

A3: I've seen it happen to where whatever the pastor say –

A1: And I've seen it get real –

A3: Yeah. Whatever – because she would come. He wouldn't go to church with her for whatever reason. She'd come home. She's telling him about what the pastor said about her man and this, this, and that.

A1: Yeah.

A3: Well, wait a minute. I done worked all week. I don't want to hear nothing about what no other man has said, no matter who he is.

A5: That's my granddaddy!

A3: You're not going to tell me what no man said. Ain't nobody going to tell me how to run my house.

A1: Yes.

A3: When I was small I went...

A1: Yes.

A3: I went to church when I was small. I know enough about the Bible. Never touched it in 10 or 15 years but I know enough to run my house. How is he going to tell me? He's not in this house with me and you. Don't never come tell me about – and that's an argument.

Q: Yeah.

A1: Yeah.

A3: Unnecessary argument.

A1: Oh yeah.

A3: All on just an opinion.

A1: Yeah.

A3: Of him passing his judgment.

A1: Right.

Q: Yeah.

A3: Again, being the fleshly man.

Q: Yes.

A1: Right.

A3: In the pulpit.

A6: Yes. Yes. When I was previously married, and I remember when we got married someone for a wedding gift, someone give us like a...it was a nice African, like, _____. You know, something to sit on or whatever.

A3: Mm-hmm.

A6: And, you know, we opened gifts up. I mean, I put it up and I guess my wife at that time had come home and she saw it and she took it down. She said, "We got to take this down." And I was like, "What are you talking about? Someone gave us that as a gift." You know, it was a symbol of African –

A3: Right.

Q: Right.

A6: She was like, "No, no, no. Pastor said –" Shoes come off. "A certain television evangelist?" She was like, "Pastor said these are like idols in the house."

A2: Oh no.

A6: I mean, it was blowup. It was a little mini blow up.

A2: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Oh yeah. Something as insignificant as a gift got –

A6: I mean, but she was serious.

A2: Oh, I know she was. Yeah. We went to a deliverance service here. Remember that? Remember Pastor – I forget his name. But anyway.

A1: Sam?

A2: Huh? No, not Pastor Sam. Not Pastor Sam. It was the guy...anyway, I can't remember his name. the whole family – they had a deliverance ministry and first I went to his house because Mary's always been different. She's always had a little bit – she's not churched. And I was, so they said, "Y'all need to go to a deliverance class because we think you need it." So, same as you said, the first thing that got mentioned was all the things they thought African symbols mean. You've been out of this country. African symbols. Have you had any affiliation with any fraternities or masons?

Q: All of that is –

A2: All that was taboo. You could not have any symbols of those types of things in your household.

Q: Mm-hmm.

A2: You had to...so when we got home, we had to move every – my grandfather makes them. Everything you give, anything that was gifted –

Q: Wow.

A2: Anything of those things out of your house.

A6: But I've seen that too. Which was odd. My brother was...my brother passed away. He was a Pentecostal minister. I hadn't seen him because he left from Louisiana and moved here. He had his ministry, and this is how the church – I just thought about him in reference to the church just running with everything that the pastor says. I hadn't seen him in about 10 or 15 years when he left Louisiana and came here. He was a minister at a Pentecostal church in _____, I think. I walked in his church and I greeted everybody. No one knew who I was, so I greeted everybody. I'm a newcomer. The minute the service starts, first thing that comes out my brother's mouth is, "Oh man, what's up? Meet my little brother. I hope he isn't sleeping with all the women like he was doing when I was back home." What?
[laughter]

A6: See, you're – do you hear your response? Because I'm sitting in the front of the church, you know, trying to show reverence to my brother as the minister, the head of this congregation. But you're going to make a statement like that? I'm prejudged from that point on. So you know what I did? I just sat there and I just looked at everybody, like reading their facial expressions. Now, again, people change. If that was as I was a teenager, I didn't know any better. So I've gotten older now.

Q: Uh-huh.

A6: And you haven't seen me in all this time. That's not the first thing you want people to remember about your little brother.

Q: Yeah.

A6: What does that say about you? Even though you're the head of the church, what does that say about you? If your little brother was doing it, he had to get it from somebody. This is what I'm thinking. You know? So again, for ministers to be the leaders and not know how significant they are and their opinions. Because it's not a fact; it's pretty much their opinion.

Q: Yeah.

A6: It makes a big difference.

Q: It does.

A1: Yeah, it does.

A6: You know, they have more power than they know.

A1: They do.

SMURRAY/pti:ar

Appendix F: Request Letter for Phase 3 Survey Participants

Greeting Brothers,

I hope this letter finds you well, and continuing to prosper.

I am a current doctoral student at New York Theological Seminary, completing my studies in Conflict Transformation.

As part of my dissertation, I'm administering a survey that will solicit your responses pertaining to images of God, biblical language, and the perceptions of women generated from those images and perceptions. Some questions will assume that you've experienced Christian teachings at some point in your life – but even if you've had very little experience, I'm asking that you answer to the best of your ability. **ANSWERS TO THE SURVEY WILL BE KEPT COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL!** Please know that the completion and submission of the survey is strictly voluntary. While there is no pressure to participate, your willingness to do so will be greatly appreciated.

I am asking that you complete the survey (see survey link below) by October 29, 2015, which would give me ample time to collect and analyze the results.

Please don't hesitate to call or email if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you in advance!

Respectfully,

Spencer
313-779-2513
spencemurray@gmail.com

Appendix G: PowerPoint Presentations M.O.S.T Workshop 1

Images of God, Women, and Violence

Spencer Murray

ICE BREAKER

Exercise

Precautionary Tales

What steps do you take on a daily basis to prevent yourselves from being sexually assaulted?

- One in every four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime.
- It is estimated 1.3 million women are victims of physical assault by an intimate partner each year.
- 85% of domestic violence victims are women.
- One in 6 women and 1 in 33 men have experienced an attempted or completed rape.
- Three women are killed by a current or former intimate partner each day in America.

A Women's Issue or Men's Issue?

Less than 1% of rape is committed by women



Media Clip: Jackson Katz - Men's Issue

Cultures of Privilege

- ❑ Turning a blind eye to the oppression of others
- ❑ Victim blaming



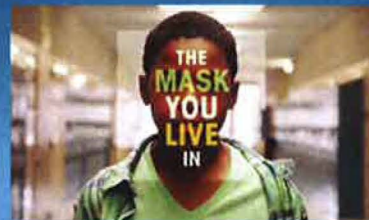
What's the Difference?



After hundreds of years of anti-racist struggle, more than ever before non-white people are currently calling attention to the primary role white people must play in anti-racist struggle. The same is true of the struggle to eradicate sexism – men have a primary role to play ...in particular, men have a tremendous contribution to make...in the area of exposing, confronting, opposing, and transforming the sexism of their male peers.

Bill Hooks
The White Feminist by Jackson Katz

Media Clip: Men and Masculinity

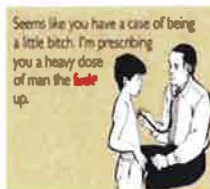


...no one talks about the role patriarchal notions of manhood play in teaching boys that it is their nature to kill, then teaching them that they can do nothing to change this nature – nothing, that is, that will leave their masculinity intact...Only a revolution of values in our nation will end male violence, and that revolution will necessarily be based on a love ethic.

Bill Hooks
The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity and Love

Gender Separation & Feminine Oppression

Hyper Masculinity and Self Hatred



Violence Within, Violence Without





Appendix H: PowerPoint Presentations M.O.S.T Workshop 2

Images of God: Women, Gender and Violence

Spencer Murray

ICE BREAKER

"The truth is that male religious leaders have had -- and still have -- an option to interpret holy teachings either to exalt or subjugate women. They have, for their own selfish ends, overwhelmingly chosen the latter. Their continuing choice provides the foundation or justification for much of the pervasive persecution and abuse of women throughout the world."

facebook.com/abolishrepublicanopposition

JIMMY CARTER

2014.01.01

In the first creation story (Genesis 1:27) God is described as creating man, both male and female at the same time: "So God created man in his own image. In the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." This might be interpreted as implying equality between the two genders.

But in the second creation story, (Genesis 2:7) God formed only a man: "...the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

Finding no helper, God created Eve out of the one of Adam's ribs. The term "helper" has historically been interpreted as implying an inferior role for Eve.

In Genesis 2:27, Adam later asserts his authority over Eve by naming her: "...she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." In ancient times, one was believed to have authority over a person or thing by naming it.

Woman is a temple built over a sewer.

Greggillan, "The father of Latin Christianity" (1260-1241)

The word and works of God is quite clear; that women were made either to be wives or prostitutes.

Martin Luther, Reformer (1483-1546), Works 12:94



In pain shall you bring forth children, woman, and you shall turn to your husband and he shall rule over you. And do you know that you are Eve? God's sentence hangs still over all your sex and His punishment weighs down upon you. You are the devil's gateway; you are she who first violated the forbidden tree and broke the law of God. It was you who coaxed your way around him whom the devil had not the force to attack. With what ease you shattered the image of God: Man! Because of the death you merited, even the Son of God had to die... Woman, you are the gate to hell.

- Tertullian, "the father of Latin Christianity" (c160-225)



Woman is a misbegotten man and has a faulty and defective nature in comparison to his. Therefore she is unsure in herself. What she cannot get, she seeks to obtain through lying and diabolical deceptions. And so, to put it briefly, one must be on one's guard with every woman, as if she were a poisonous snake and the horned devil. ... Thus in evil and perverse doings woman is cleverer, that is, slyer, than man. Her feelings drive woman toward evil, just as reason impels man toward all good.

- Saint Albertus Magnus, Dominican theologian, 13th century

Men have broad and large chests, and small narrow hips, and more understanding than women, who have but small narrow breasts, and broad hips, to the end they should remain at home, sit still, keep house, and bear and bring up children.

- Martin Luther, Reformer (1483-1546)

A wife is to submit graciously to the servant leadership of her husband, even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ.

- Official Faith and Message Statements of Southern Baptist Convention (Summer 1998)

Media Clip: A Woman's Place



Even as the church must fear Christ Jesus, so must the wives also fear their husbands. And this inward fear must be shewed by an outward meekness and lowliness in her speeches and carriage to her husband ...For it there be not fear and reverence in the inferior, there can be no sound nor constant honor yielded to the superior

John Dod: A Plaine and Familiar Exposition of the Ten Commandments (1603)

Me > You

The root of masculine is stronger, and of feminine weaker. The sun is a governing planet to certain planets, while the moon borrows her light from the sun, and is less or weaker.

Joseph Smith, founder of LDS movement (1805-1844)

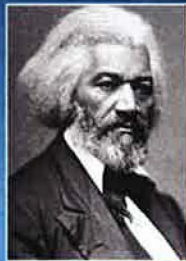
The feminist agenda is not about equal rights for women. It is about a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians.

Pat Robertson, Southern Baptist leader (1992)

Media Clip: It's A Woman's World

When I ran away from slavery, it was for myself; when I advocated emancipation, it was for my people; but when I stood up for the rights of women, self was out of the question, and I found a little nobility in the act.

Frederick Douglass



We hold woman to be justly entitled to all we claim for man. We go farther, and express our conviction that all political rights which it is expedient for man to exercise, it is equally so for women.

1848 Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls



*Right is of no sex - -
Truth is of no color - -
God is the Father of
us all, and we are all
Brethren.*



Appendix I: Phase #1 Survey

Images of God and Perceptions of Women

A Questionnaire

1. Which age group best describes you?
 - a. 18-24 years old
 - b. 25-34 years old
 - c. 35-44 years old
 - d. 45-54 years old
 - e. 55-64 years old
 - f. 65-74 years old
 - g. 75 years or older

2. Please specify your Race or Ethnicity
 - a. White
 - b. Hispanic or Latino
 - c. Black or African American
 - d. Native American or American Indian
 - e. Asian/Pacific Islander
 - f. Other _____

3. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?
 - a. No schooling completed
 - b. Nursery School to 8th grade
 - c. Some high school, no diploma
 - d. High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (GED)
 - e. Some college credit, no degree
 - f. Trade/technical/vocational training
 - g. Associate degree
 - h. Bachelor's degree

- i. Master's degree
 - j. Professional degree
 - k. Doctorate degree
4. What is your marital status?
- a. Single, never married
 - b. Married or domestic partnership
 - c. Widowed
 - d. Divorced
 - e. Separated
5. Employment Status: Are you currently...?
- a. Employed for wages
 - b. Self-employed
 - c. Out of work and looking for work
 - d. Out of work but not currently looking for work
 - e. A homemaker
 - f. A student
 - g. Military
 - h. Retired
 - i. Unable to work
6. What is your religious affiliation?
- a. Protestant Christian
 - b. Roman Catholic
 - c. Evangelical Christian
 - d. Jewish
 - e. Muslim
 - f. Hindu
 - g. Buddhist
 - h. No religious affiliation
 - i. Other _____

7. What is your earliest recollection of the gender of God?
- a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Other _____
8. What early influences contributed to your understanding of the gender of God?
9. What characteristics or attributes did you assign to God during your early spiritual development?
10. What early influences contributed to your idea of men's and women's roles...
- a. At home?
 - b. In church?
 - c. In the workplace?

11. Consider the following scriptures and the implications of each. Answer each question to the best of your ability.
- a. **Genesis 2:21-23.** What does this scripture suggest about the status of women and their relationship with men?
 - b. **Genesis 3:12-16.** What images and perceptions of women come to mind when you read this scripture?
 - c. **1Corinthians 11:7-9.** What does this scripture suggest about a women's purpose and her relationship to God and to man? How does the scripture suggest her relationship to God is different from man's?
 - d. **Ephesians 5:22-24.** What roles or duties of women come to mind when reading this scripture?
12. How have any of the above scriptures and responses impacted your current or past relationships with women?

Scriptures

Genesis 2:21-23 So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman; for she was taken out of man.

Genesis 3:12-16 The man said, "The woman you put here with me-she gave me some fruit for the tree, and I ate it." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate.".....v16- To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

ICorinthians 11:7-9 A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.

Ephesians 5:22-24 Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior

Appendix J: Phase #3 Survey

Images of God and Perceptions of Women

God, Women, and the Bible

The overall purpose of my dissertation project is to raise men's awareness of how perceptions of God and patriarchal biblical interpretations can affect men's attitudes and behaviors toward women. While I'm fully aware that many of your current perceptions of God and women have evolved, this initial survey is solely designed to ascertain your early Christian understanding. At the end of the survey, you will have an opportunity to comment on how your perceptions have evolved over time. Again, please answer all questions to the best of your ability, based on perceptions gathered from your early Christian experience.

1. Which age group best describes you?

☐ 18-24 years old

☐ 25-34 years old

☐ 35-44 years old

☐ 45-54 years old

☐ 55-64 years old

☐ 65-74 years old

☐ 75 years or older

☐ Other (please specify)

2. Which gender do you identify as?

☐ Woman

☐ Man

☐ Other (please specify)

Images of God and Perceptions of Women

3. To which racial or ethnic group(s) do you identify most?

- ☐ African/African-American/Black
- ☐ Arab/Middle Eastern
- ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander
- ☐ Caribbean/West Indian
- ☐ Hispanic/Latino
- ☐ Native American/American Indian
- ☐ White/European American
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Images of God and Perceptions of Women

4. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- ☐ Some high school, no diploma
- ☐ High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (GED)
- ☐ Some college credit, no degree
- ☐ Associate Degree
- ☐ Bachelor's Degree
- ☐ Master's Degree
- ☐ Doctorate Degree
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Images of God and Perceptions of Women

5. What is current relationship status?

- ☐ Single
- ☐ In a primary relationship with a significant other
- ☐ Married or domestic partnership
- ☐ Divorced or Separated
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Images of God and Perceptions of Women

6. Are you currently working?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Images of God and Perceptions of Women

7. Are you currently in the military?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Images of God and Perceptions of Women

8. Which denomination were you most affiliated with in your early Christian experience?

- ☐ African Methodist Episcopal
- ☐ Baptist
- ☐ Catholicism
- ☐ Church of God in Christ
- ☐ Evangelical
- ☐ Lutheran
- ☐ New Thought
- ☐ Pentacostal
- ☐ Presbyterian
- ☐ Southern Baptist
- ☐ United Methodist
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Images of God and Perceptions of Women

9. What is your earliest recollection of the gender of God?

☐ Woman

☐ Man

☐ Other (please specify)

Images of God and Perceptions of Women

10. What early influences contributed to your understanding of God's gender? *Check all that apply*

- ☐ Parents
- ☐ Pastor
- ☐ Early biblical teachings
- ☐ Social roles of men and women in the community and church
- ☐ Cultural expectations of men and women in society
- ☐ Bible
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Images of God and Perceptions of Women

11. What characteristics or attributes did you assign to God during your early spiritual development?

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Angry
- ☐ Jealous
- ☐ Vindictive
- ☐ Loving
- ☐ Authoritative
- ☐ Nurturing
- ☐ Compassionate
- ☐ Controlling
- ☐ Demanding
- ☐ Rigid
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Images of God and Perceptions of Women

12. What were your early impressions of women's roles *at home*? *Check all that apply*

- ☐ Women took care of the children
- ☐ Women cooked for their families
- ☐ Women cleaned and took care of the house
- ☐ Women submitted to men's authority
- ☐ Women were primary caretakers
- ☐ Women were primary decision makers
- ☐ Women shared responsibility and decision making with men in matters of the household
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Images of God and Perceptions of Women

13. What were your early impressions of women's roles in church? *Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Women were nurses and caretakers
- ☐ Women were the Sunday School teachers
- ☐ Women preached from the pulpit
- ☐ Women led the church in prayer
- ☐ Women cooked and served church meals
- ☐ Women made up a majority of the congregation
- ☐ Women shared leadership roles and performed the same duties as men
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Images of God and Perceptions of Women

14. What were your early impressions of women in the workplace? *Check all that apply*

- ☐ Women held or shared in leadership positions in the same manner as men
- ☐ Women were recognized for job performance and held the same advancement potential as men
- ☐ Women received less recognition while performing the same job duties as men
- ☐ Women were subordinate to men
- ☐ Women held the majority of secretarial positions
- ☐ Women held the majority of leadership positions
- ☐ Women were subject to sexual harassment by men
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Scriptural Interpretation

Consider the following scripture and its implication. Please answer the question based on your early Christian teachings and understandings.

Genesis 2:21-23 - So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman; for she was taken out of man."

15. What does this scripture suggest about the status of women and their relationship with men?

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Woman belongs to man
- ☐ Women are a secondary creation of God
- ☐ Women are weaker than men
- ☐ Women are part of God's original creation
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Scriptural Interpretation

Consider the following scripture and its implication. Please answer the question based on your early Christian teachings and understanding.

Genesis 3:12-16 - The man said, "The woman you put here with me-she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate..." v16- To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you."

16. What images, thoughts, or perceptions of women first come to mind when you read this scripture?
Check all that apply.

- ☐ Women are easily deceived
- ☐ Women are deceiving
- ☐ Women can't be trusted
- ☐ Women are bad
- ☐ Women deserve punishment for disobedience
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Images of God and Perceptions of Women

Scriptural Interpretation

Consider the following scripture and its implication. Please answer the question based on your early Christian teachings and understanding.

1Corinthians 11:7-9 - A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.

17. What was your initial understanding of what this scripture suggested about a woman's purpose and her relationship to God and to man? *Check all that apply.*

- ☐ God gave woman to man
- ☐ A woman's purpose is to serve man
- ☐ Women's worth is justified by man, not God
- ☐ Women must go through man to get to God
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Images of God and Perceptions of Women

Scriptural Interpretation

Consider the following scripture and its implication. Please answer the question based on your early Christian teachings and understanding.

Ephesians 5:22-24 - Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.

18. What roles or duties of men and women initially came to mind when you first encountered this scripture? *Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Men have authority over women
- ☐ Men make decisions for women
- ☐ Women should not have power over men
- ☐ Women follow their husband's lead
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Images of God and Perceptions of Women

19. In your early Christian experience, was there a particular version of the Bible that you or your church relied on most? (Ex. King James Version, The Living Bible, NIV Bible, Amplified Bible, etc.)

Images of God and Perceptions of Women

20. Did your *early Christian experience* teach you to interpret the Bible literally, as the infallible Word of God? (Infallible: *incapable of making mistakes or being wrong*)

☐ Yes

☐ No

Other (please specify)

Images of God and Perceptions of Women

21. When reflecting on your answers and your early Christian upbringing, briefly explain how your understanding of God and women has evolved to where it is now, and how it has shaped your relationships with women.

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